NEA Today
The Magazine of the National Education Association
FEBRUARY 2000

For great yields on your savings, see page 38.

Reading Takes Center Stage

Jamie Lee Curtis joins a cast of millions for NEA's third annual Read Across America

See page 8

NEA Today

Volume 18 • Number 2

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Read Across America
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COVER STORY

Connecticut teacher Mary Fitzgerald and her students have already planned their Read Across America project. So have thousands of other educators as NEA's Read Across America celebration on March 2 nears. How about you?

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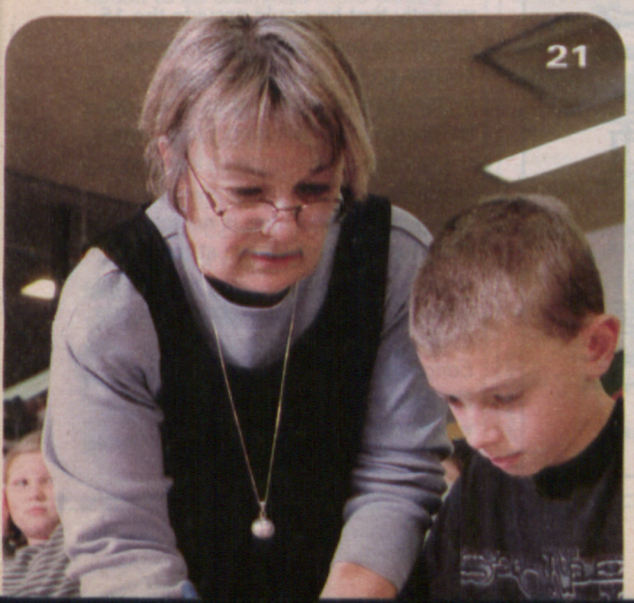

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Letters

WRONG NUMBER

Lynn Bonsey's article "Dial T for Teacher" (My Turn, January) sent a chill up my spine. Not only would I never give out my home number to my students, I don't even let them know the name of the town that I live in.

Maybe Surry, Maine, is like the idyllic Mayberry RFD, but I teach in a large suburban school district just outside Washington, D.C. Twenty years ago, as a new teacher and single mother, I moved to an apartment just a few blocks away from the high school where I was hired. I wanted to be part of the community and have my two children, then three and eight, grow up in the town where I worked.

I laughed off the first incident when a carload of students came by on a Saturday night and yelled out for me to come party with them. I even tried to ignore the obscene phone calls.

But the day after report cards came out, I discovered someone had thrown a brick through my bedroom window, flattened the tires on my car, and spray-painted obscenities on my front door. I recognized the handwriting and the misspellings.

I moved to the next county. Ever since then I've paid to have my phone number unlisted. With the advent of caller ID I don't even call parents from my home phone.

Margaret Bartley
Montgomery County, Maryland

WAY TO GO!

Congratulations to Barbara Morgan (Interview, January) for her strength and perseverance in becoming not only a teacher, but an astronaut in training.

Southwest Wisconsin teachers had the opportunity to hear Marsha Ivins, a veteran of four space flights, present a stimulating recount of her experiences.

Educators should sit up and take notice of these professional women in space, but so should our up-and-coming future—the children in our classrooms.

Marcia Chambers,
Lancaster, Wisconsin

BYTES FOR BEGINNERS

With a little care, the modern searcher has a tremendous advantage because of the search engine, as explained in Bits & Bytes (January).

Search engines are a funny breed. They are mechanical in their routines, but they seem almost human in their quest to make sense of a user's request. Following the rules presented in the article will reduce a user's time considerably, but I would like to offer one tip that has helped me immensely.

When I first started searching on the Internet, I simply typed in a keyword that I was looking for (on Alta Vista), not realizing that the engine would produce any and everything that has this combination of letters in it.

I soon found that limiting my search by adding quotation marks quickly produced better results. I'm not sure if this works with all search engines, but it has been very beneficial for me.

Albert Baggetta
Agawan, Massachusetts

The "Good News for Reading" article (Bits & Bytes, January) was an eye-opener for me. It's great to know that "CNN Newsroom" offers a Web site with lesson plans that can go along with our educational program.

As a teacher, I'm always interested in finding new methods to improve my students' reading skills and to better meet the needs of all my students. Getting students to enjoy reading is very important.

In order for students to be successful in reading, you need to build a strong reading program. Using a variety of resources will do that.

I would like to thank Wanda Zamorano for this information.

Judy Pounds
Durham, North Carolina

21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS

Our goal for public education in the next century should be more than survival (Debate, January).

The time has come for us to overhaul our outdated educational system before outsiders do it for us. After all, the current factory model of education, where we warehouse children in buildings that resemble prisons, has changed very little over the last nearly 100 years.

Yes, we have tinkered endlessly with the system, but the basic institutional structure of school has changed negligibly over that time.

The first thing to change is the idea of Carnegie Units where "seat time" equals learning. Education is not a function of time. Education should be about what one can do, rather than how long someone "has been exposed to learning," quietly sitting in seats listening to others.

The belief that all students a certain age need to learn the same thing at exactly the same time and rate is ludicrous.

Most adults would agree that much of their education was meaningless—and, at times, mind numbingly boring.

Yet our schools have changed little, and we wonder why our children loathe going to school for 12 years and set "getting through" as their primary purpose for being there.

If we do not set about improving education as a priority for the 21st century, we won't have to worry about much else.

David Fiore
Bend, Oregon

AL GORE SUPPORT

I am troubled by your recent rather too enthusiastic endorsement of Al Gore for the upcoming primaries (News, January). This is rather harsh treatment for Bill Bradley, a friend of education and at least deserving of notice. Did you even mention his name? I didn't see it.

I'm even willing to read about Republicans and to be educated regarding their positions. I understand that the NEA is as much a political creature as anything else, but a nod to fair play would be more becoming. Are we not early enough in the campaign process to still warrant the appearance of an open mind?

Leaf Schumann
Blaine, Washington

Editor's note: The November NEA Today, *illustrated by photos of presidential candidates Bill Bradley and Al Gore shot during their interviews with NEA, explained how the NEA recommendation process works. To check the details of how NEA goes about determining how the candidates measure up on the issues, go to www.nea.org/lac/elec2000/recom.html.*

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

In regard to the response from Renae Hanson (Letters, January) on paraprofessionals, I don't think the issue here is whether teachers should receive a duty-free lunch while the "aides" relieve them. The issue is a matter of *respect!*

While the teacher probably receives at least one duty-free prep each day, the para is off to another classroom enriching and reinforcing the learning of yet another group of students. No break for her!

While we're comparing (paralegals to attorneys), let's look at the percentage of dues compared to the salary of both paras and teachers. The para pays a whole lot more!

Paras do not profess to be teachers. But they are human beings. And as for you "having" a para, you do not have a para. The para is there to assist and enhance the lessons, working alongside the teacher—not for her!

Rachelle Hafey
Howell, New Jersey

ABOUT THE E-RATE

I take exception to your praise of the E-rate as discussed in your November issue (Interview).

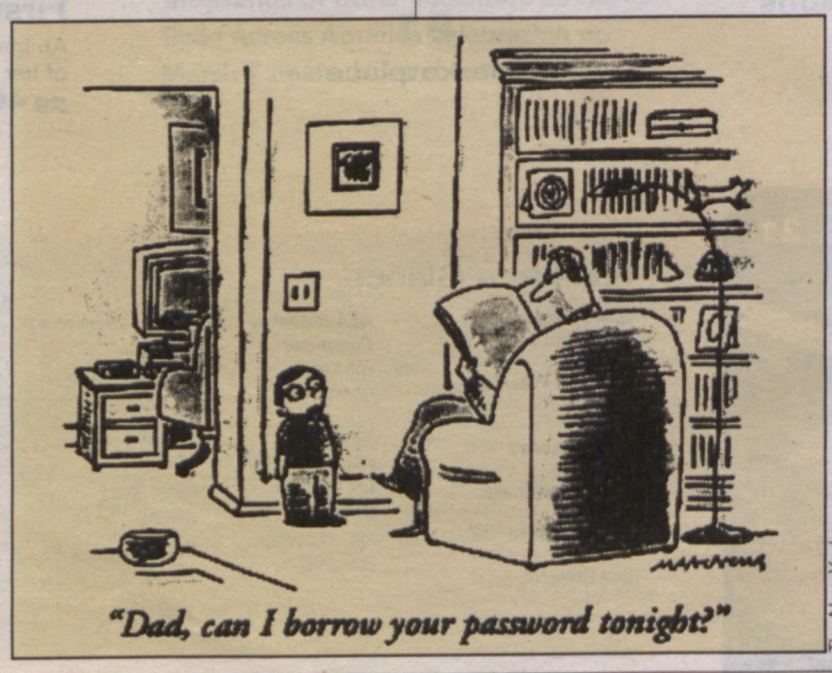
First, the E-rate is a tax, imposed mostly on businesses (I know: Besides teaching full-time, I own a business), and cleverly disguised on our monthly phone bills.

Second, the E-rate is oppressive to Internet service providers. One of the owners of a local ISP told me recently that he could provide the 15 schools in our district free Internet access on his system for less money that he is paying as a tax, on his phone bills, to support the E-rate!

Third, your reference to learning more about E-rate using www.fcc.gov is incorrect. There is no reference to E-rate anywhere at that site..

Alan Kent
Sebring, Florida

Editor's note: The background on the E-rate appears on the Web at www.sl.universalservice.org.



The New Yorker

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of five ways:

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- Through the Web: Go to www.nea.org/neatoday and click on "Submit a Letter to the Editor"
- By E-mail: Write to neatoday@nea.org
- By Fax: 202/822-7206
- By Phone: 202/822-7201

Letters are edited for length and clarity.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

I have been an active member of NEA and the Georgia Association of Educators for 16 years. I have just finished re-reading your December article, "Academic Freedom Takes a Hit." I cannot believe that it laments a higher court's rejection of the use of profanity and R-rated films in America's public schools.

How sad it is that people think like this today!

You should be glad we have some strong limitations on these practices where our young people are concerned, and you don't have to worry that there's going to be too much censorship—we Americans have very little of that once we graduate from high school.

If public schools don't start teaching more of what is right and good, our nation is going to end up with many more adults whose consciences have been seared—and some of them might become your next-door neighbors!

I believe the Holy Bible is right when it says, "Raise up children in the way they should go, and they will never depart from it."

You should believe it, too.

D.S. Wesson
Doraville, Georgia

ON GUN CONTROL

In a letter in the November issue of *NEA Today*, an Iowa teacher compares the death toll of guns to that of automobiles. Such a comparison needs to be examined more closely.

To drive a car, a person must pass a test, which, for many people, is the most difficult test they will ever take. Perhaps we should do the same for guns. Every vehicle must be registered every year with the state, and in some states must pass inspection every year. Compare that to guns.

Dozens of safety devices are featured on automobiles, many required by law. The NRA will not allow even one safety device to be required by law on guns.

Hundreds of thousands of laws govern every aspect of the use of motor vehicles, and hundreds of thousands of law enforcement officers spend much of their time enforcing these laws. By comparison, the laws governing the use of firearms are miniscule.

Every vehicle owner must pay hundreds of dollars per year for insurance, in case the vehicle is in an accident or is misused.

Shouldn't we do at least as much for guns?

A more complete comparison would also include the basic purpose, or function, of motor vehicles and firearms and their relative contribution to society.

Eugene Carlson
Mitchell, South Dakota

OUT OF PLACE

While I wish the best for all peoples, the article about sweatshop child labor (News, November) was incomplete and misplaced. As my daughter asked, "But what will 12 cents buy in China? Perhaps a lot."

Please don't try to apply American standards to other countries. And the article, while compassionate, does not belong in a publication that serves American professional educators. Perhaps the editorial section of the Sunday *New York Times* would be a more appropriate place.

Gary Wilson
Northeast, Maryland

FAULTY COMPARISON

Keith Ensminger's comments about the meaningless comparison between American and Asian school systems (Letters, November) were right on the money as far as homework and instructional duties are concerned, but there is much more to be said about cram schools and other factors.

Over half of all Japanese junior high and high schoolers attend cram schools (private, for-profit test-preparation institutions) on evenings and weekends, in hopes of achieving higher scores on high school and college entrance examinations.

Cram schools teach students how to take standardized tests and instruct them in accelerated versions of the national curriculum for math, science, and language arts. The Japanese invest tremendous amounts of time and money in cram schools because, in Japan, one's alma mater determines one's career choices to much higher degree than in the United States.

Anne Hooghart
Battle Creek, Michigan

NEAT REDESIGN

As I read magazines, I find that *NEA Today* is too tall, a little flimsy, and more difficult to control (on the order of a newspaper). Have you noticed?

Donna Fredrick
Grand Island, Nebraska

President's Viewpoint

BY BOB CHASE

Tests and Sensibility

Taking a stand on standards and high-stakes testing

According to psychologists, many people have the same two recurring nightmares. In one dream, we're walking down the street naked. In the other, we're in school and suddenly have to take a test for which we're utterly unprepared.

Unfortunately, this second nightmare is becoming reality for thousands of children caught in the push for higher standards and high-stakes testing. Though noble and necessary, new "accountability" reforms are too often being implemented in a haphazard, break-neck fashion across America—and wrecking havoc.

In the mad dash to raise the bar, high-stakes tests have been formulated that are often not aligned with curricula or standards. In many states, teachers are not taught how to incorporate new standards into their lessons, and many districts don't have resources in place to make such reforms successful.

The results are almost Kafkaesque. In New York City, for example, children are taking do-or-die exams on material they've never been taught. Regrettably, in order to raise test scores, some teachers have resorted to cheating.

In Massachusetts, statewide tests designed to fortify public education have boomeranged. High-performing schools like Cambridge High are modifying ambitious curricula to "teach to the test."

"Applying one-size-fits-all standards to a world full of 'savage inequalities' is grossly negligent."

In Virginia, the state's once-lauded new standards—created without input from teachers–have created a backlash. Among other things, these standards require third graders to "explain the term 'civilization' and describe the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome, in terms of geographic features, government, agriculture, architecture, music, art, religion, sports and roles of men, women, and children." Is it any surprise that only 7 percent of Virginia's schools are living up to state testing standards?

All across the country, I'm hearing similar reports from NEA members. Reports about teachers required to adopt a new curriculum without new textbooks. Reports about standards that read like a wish-list concocted by thinktanks. Reports about test results stigmatizing underprivileged and minority children. What do we do?

When I attended the governors' Education Summit last fall, I made it clear that, yes, NEA members support high standards. Yes, we believe that all children are capable of learning. And, yes, schools should be held accountable for student achievement.

But I stated unequivocally that applying one-size-fits-all standards to a world full of "savage inequalities" is grossly negligent. If we truly want to educate all children to high standards, we need to make unprecedented investments in our schools. We need to prepare teachers to teach new material. And we need to ensure that teachers help determine what expectations are appropriate and realistic.

Standards and testing may be the greatest challenge facing public schools in this new millennium. We in NEA need to use our collective voice to ensure that a more carefully thought-out approach is taken. And parents are natural allies in this effort.

Albert Einstein once said, "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity." By working together on this issue, we have a unique opportunity to strengthen both public education and our relationship with America's families. These, to me, are dreams worth pursuing.

Comments? You can E-mail Bob Chase at BobChase@nea.org. If you would like a response, please be sure to include your name and NEA local affiliate.

NEA's new national television advertising is about our commitment to

- helping every child succeed
- working with parents
- building strong public schools

Don't miss it.

Begins late January 2000. Check www.nea.org for more details.

nea

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Trying To Save Them All

One of the joys of teaching is running into relatives of former students and hearing about their successes. Sometimes, as this California teacher relates, the news isn't so good.

BY RUBEN CUETO

My wife made an appointment for me at my local hair salon after work. The day had been uneventful, considering that I teach middle school. This means no major property damage or unforeseen amputations had occurred in my seventh grade classroom.

Walking into the salon, a woman I didn't know approached me. She asked me if I was a teacher. She said she recognized me as the teacher of her young cousin. His name was Francisco, though everyone called him Kiko.

My mind hit the rewind button. Kiko was one of those bright kids who thought homework assignments were part of an option package he'd rather pass on. His quick mind and restless spirit made his behavior a challenge.

Still, Kiko was likable, even admirable. I would catch him helping other students with their work, even when he didn't bother to do it himself. But I never praised him for this. That might have damaged his veneer of coolness.

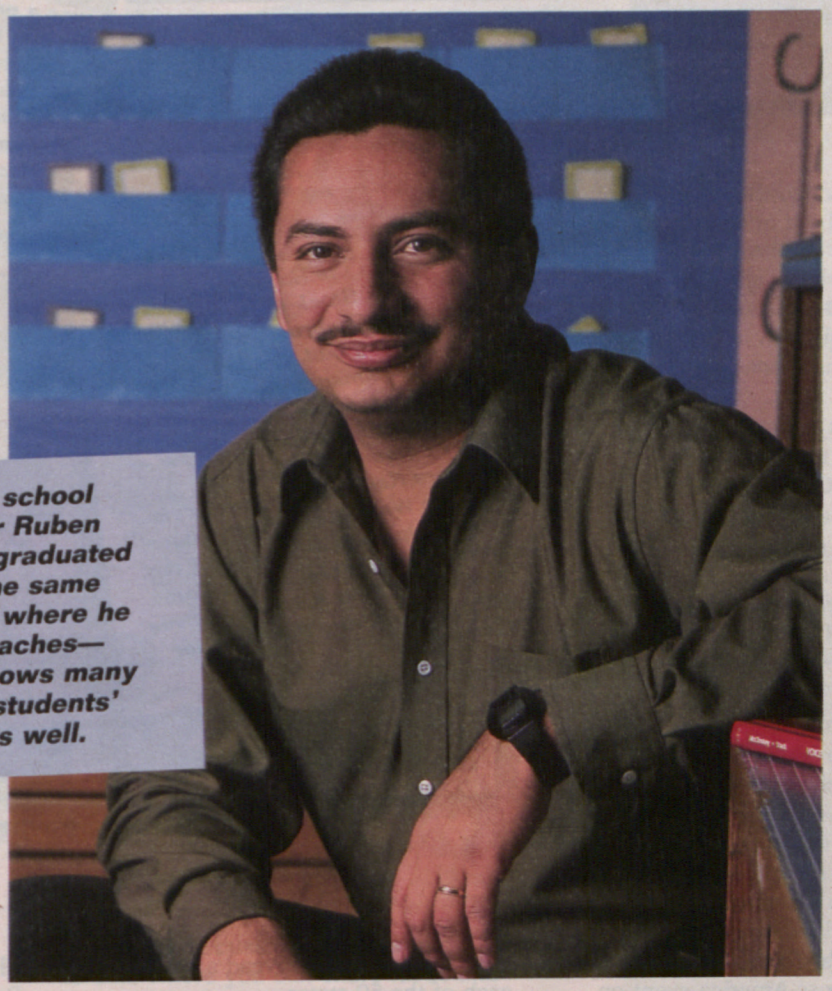
I remembered one incident in seventh grade. It was time to turn in homework, and Kiko gave his classic "forgot-it-at-home" routine. His parents were aware of his poor work habits, but I felt I had to intervene again. Too much potential was being wasted here.

One evening I drove to Kiko's house around the dinner hour. Surprise covered his mother's face when she saw me, but that word doesn't begin to describe Kiko's reaction. His face was pale and his arms were swinging back and forth like some early 20th century attempt at flight.

I told his mom that Kiko keeps forgetting the work at home, so I was stopping by to pick it up. There's no need to describe what happened next. You've pictured it already.

Fast forward to some years later. Kiko advanced to high school. I was told he had matured—and was even doing his homework—but that was all I knew. Once students leave the classroom, they drift from our lives like autumn leaves.

Unfortunately, the news I would receive about Kiko would be most unwelcome. He had gone drinking and driving with a cousin during spring vacation. They had a serious auto accident. There's no need to describe what happened. You've pictured it already.



Bob Riha, Jr.

Middle school teacher Ruben Cueto graduated from the same school where he now teaches—and knows many of his students' families well.

Back to the hair salon, present day, and with Kiko's cousin. She laughed as I told her of my home visit. That was her cousin alright. I then relayed to her the postscript to my visit that very few people knew about. A couple of days after my surprise visit, Kiko came up to me.

"Why did you do that?" he asked. "Why did you come over my house?"

I remember looking at him as if I were looking at myself.

"Because you're worth saving, Kiko."

His cousin then lost her smile. She began to cry. She cried enough for us both. No words came to me. I awkwardly said something to end the conversation quickly and sat to await my haircut. I had made a complete stranger cry.

I sat in the hair stylist's chair, staring at nothing, staring at everything. I thought about all the things Kiko would miss. I watched my hair fall to the floor, thankful for every student I've ever had. I thought about all my former students and the current crop. I thought about tomorrow's lesson plan. And I thought about who needed saving. ✔

Ruben Cueto has taught seventh grade language arts and social studies at Hargitt Middle School in Norwalk, California for seven years. His E-mail address is rubenc49@aol.com.

In the early '80s, *NEA Today* regularly carried ads from a company selling grade calculators. I don't know if the company's still in business, but my guess is it couldn't keep up with the sophisticated electronic tools that reside in the working environment of many school staff.

I'm pretty sure that that grade calculator wouldn't have been able to handle some of today's grading systems, at least not the one that produced my daughter's recent mid-term report.

Bill Fischer
editor

It was an electronic marvel—a two-page print out with rows and rows of raw scores for quizzes, tests, homework assignments, and participation. Each was assigned a certain weight within a category and then a percentage of the total for the subject.

I was tempted to call the teacher to find out what kind of wondrous calculator had produced such a detailed accounting for each of her 30-some history/language arts students. Even if I'd wanted to, there was no way I could have done the calculations to refute the final grade.

Another interesting idea came my way recently by phone. A new start-up company was pitching the value of software that would allow a music teacher to grade student performances on the spot using this company's software and a hand-held computer.

Instead of slogging through a bunch of cryptic notes, the teacher could just key in an evaluation, then download the notes into the traditional desktop computer. The idea came from a music teacher who'd spent 20 years trying to find an easier way to judge his students' musical works.

We're constantly bombarded with information about new products coming to the educational market. Whenever we can, we'll pass along news about some of these new tools in future issues of *NEA Today*.

Bill Fischer

Read Across

NEA's Read Across America will be bigger and better than ever this year, as millions of people of all ages join to read together in town halls and shopping malls, homes and schools, across the United States, from Wall Street to main street. And what will you be doing March 2?

Cyndi Menzel

Sarah Clopton, a pitcher for the University of Kansas softball team, and Moran Norris, a running back for the KU football team, read to first grade students at Hillcrest Elementary in Lawrence, Kansas. This event was a prelude to a March 2 celebration that will find 500 KU students reading at area high schools. University of Kansas men's basketball coach Roy Williams has also made a public service announcement for Read Across America.

The Cat in the Hat will be at the New York Stock Exchange on the morning of February 29 to sound the opening bell. Cat in the Hat Jack Kinnaman, a former Delaware teacher who's now an NEA-Retired activist, and New Jersey elementary teacher Barbara Keshishian recently visited the Wall Street trading floor to participate in a preview of the event. America Online, Random House, and First Book executives will help NEA ring the bell later this month.

Leo Sorel

Looking for ideas to help celebrate this year's Read Across America event on March 2?

NEA members, parents, and school and community leaders are posting all sorts of ideas on the Read Across America Web page, each designed to focus attention on the importance of reading in kids' lives. Here's a sampling.

■ In New Jersey, NEA member Amy Prestifilippo's Hudson Elementary School class has decorated a hallway bulletin board with a U.S. map. The goal: having students read a book from each of the 50 states.

■ In South Gardiner, Maine, 111 students at River View Community School will don Cat in the Hat tall hats purchased for them while parents and other community residents read aloud.

■ Parents visiting Terra Vista Elementary in Rancho Cucamonga, California, will be treated to a green-eggs-and-ham breakfast and invited to read their favorite Seuss books.

■ Pennsylvania's Bobtown Elementary school librarian, Annette Powelko, is "growing a bookworm" that lists all the books students have read—a pledged 1,000 books for the new millennium.

■ In Washington State, at Bremerton's West Hills Elementary, educators are inviting former teachers and community residents, including the mayor, to read to all 400 students, who'll be rotating to at least three different readers for 20- to 30-minute reading sessions.

America!

John Secoges

Pennsylvania parent Kathelleen Parsons is well into fulfilling her Read Across America pledge. The mother of four children, Parsons plans to read one Dr. Seuss book a day to her kids for 100 straight days. To underscore the value of parents reading to their children at home, she's encouraging other parents in her local school district to join in Read Across America activities. You can check the Read Across America Web page to read all about other pledges.

Mike Lydick

As part of NEA's Read Across America celebration, students at Madison's Island Avenue School in Connecticut will be deepening their geographic skills. The students will be "traveling" to 14 other Madisons in the nation, at the rate of one mile for each minute of reading they do. On an oversized map in the school's main hallway, Mary Fitzgerald, the school's reading language coordinator, helps students track their progress across the country.

RESOURCES

For up-to-the-minute info on Read Across America, make your first stop the Read Across America Web site at www.nea.org/readacross.

At the site, you can click on the Read Across America "Resources" link for tools to help plan a perfect celebration. You'll find everything from "to do" lists to sample letters to local newspapers and ideas for school board presentations.

You're also welcome, at the Read Across America site, to join in on "threaded discussions," electronic forums where you can share ideas and stories with Read Across America activists all across the country.

Want to find out who the Read Across America coordinator is in any state? Click on the "States" link to find state-by-state contact information and event updates.

Also available: the Random House Suessville at randomhouse.com/suessville, a source for games, contests, and other fun ways to enhance basic reading, math, science, and reasoning skills.

IN THE SPIRIT OF SEUSS

Over the coming weeks, NEA members will see a wide variety of Read Across America events unfold. Here's a quick list of the events on tap as NEA Today *went to press.*

■ On March 1 and 2, the largest Cat in the Hat hat in the world will be the Empire State Building! It'll be sparkling with red and white rows of lights.

■ On February 29, the Cat in the Hat himself will ring the opening bell on the New York Stock Exchange, with Bob Chase and several corporate executives on hand.

■ In February, radio stations across America will begin airing singer Reba McEntire's public service announcement about NEA's Read Across America and the importance of reading.

■ Many local newspapers will be co-sponsoring a contest that teaches tolerance, "Write What's Right," based on the witty and wise Dr. Seuss book, *The Sneetches*. Over 150 newspapers with over 13 million readers have already indicated an interest in using *The Sneetches* to discuss how to improve group relations in their own communities.

■ Dr. Seuss would be smiling at the planned antics in the NEA building on his big day. NEA will host the first-ever "Acat-emy Awards" to honor great reading programs from around the country. D.C. children will fish in *McElligot's Pool*, eat green eggs and ham, and learn about *Hop on Pop*.

■ NEA state and local affiliates are putting Seuss on the Loose in their own neighborhoods. The Ohio Education Association, for instance, has arranged for rock stars to read with children at the Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland. The Virginia Education Association is passing out tens of thousands of Teachers' Favorite Children's Books list to excited parents.

■ Nearly 30 national organizations are backing Read Across America, and their local chapters make great potential partners for community events. See the list of national supporters on the Read Across America Web site (address below left). NEA's Read Across America is a remarkable way to reach out and work with groups and people who normally don't partner with the Association.

■ March 2—the birthday of Dr. Seuss—is the single day NEA has chosen to spotlight the importance of encouraging children to develop a passion for reading. But encouraging reading, of course, is work for every day. To help, the Cat is offering reading resources for parents and teachers. Again, check the Web site for details.

■ To make the celebration festive, the new Cat-alog is out with new "Seuss devices at splendiferous prices"! How about great Cat in the Hat mylar balloons over 2' high? Or lapel pins, hats, and ties? Go to the Web.

RESOURCES

A Wealth Of Help

Here are a few resources specifically aimed at teaching reading or helping students with reading problems.

- The Learning First Alliance, an organization of 12 leading national education associations, including NEA, outlines its action plan to ensure that every student is reading well by age nine at www.learningfirst.org/readingaction.html.
- The *Los Angeles Times*' Reading by 9 program, designed to help students read at grade-level by the age of nine, is outlined on this user-friendly Web site full of reading resources.The address: www.latimes.com/HOME/NEWS/REPORTS/READBY9/lat_read1018.html.
- The National Research Council Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children has published a report on strategies for combating reading problems beginning before kindergarten. Check the study out at www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/prdyc/index.html.
- Read by Grade 3 is a resource Web site featuring books about helping with student reading problems and research on reading, in addition to a brief action plan designed to encourage student reading success. See www.readbygrade3.com.
- Readpro@topica.com—a reading teacher listserv.

Q&A

Reading and Older Kids

Should the teaching of reading skills concern only elementary teachers Geri Marshall doesn't think so. A teacher at Walnut Middle School in her hometown of Grand Island, Nebraska, Marshall has helped design a reading program for all her district's middle schools, out of her conviction that getting all students competent in reading means providing reading instruction past sixth grade.

How serious are the reading problems of students entering middle school?

Pretty serious. Seventy percent of the kids on my teams are reading two years below grade level or lower.

What strategies can content area teachers use to help students learn while improving their reading skills?

Give students three minutes to preview the material they're going to read. Have them read the first sentences of paragraphs, the bold print, the captions, and any charts, summaries, and questions.

Discuss what they've previewed to see if they understand it and find out what they already know about it.

Teach the vocabulary critical to the content, and help students become skilled in using a dictionary to learn pronunciations, derivations, and uses of words.

What single thing should teachers know that would help them improve a student's reading?

Teachers need to know each child's weaknesses and strengths and build up the weak areas. A child's phonemic awareness—the ability to understand that words are made up of sounds—can be assessed, and there are screening tests for this. But, unfortunately, they're not widely available.

One useful book is M.J. Adams' *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning About Print*.

What strategies do you use with your 7th graders?

I teach them that words are made up of sounds and phonograms—letters or groups of letters that make individual sounds. They hear the sound and see and write the phonogram as they repeat the sound. Then we reverse the process and practice again and again.

How do you interest older students in reading—and avoid embarrassing them with easy books?

Last year, for Read Across America, I told all the 7th grade students they'd be reading Dr. Seuss books to elementary students. The low level readers had no problem picking up Dr. Seuss.

I've found there are more books now written for students at low reading levels. Publishers are catering to the need. ✔

Gerik Parmele

Nebraska middle school reading teacher Geri Marshall believes reading instruction shouldn't end when students leave elementary school.

Country music recording artist Reba McEntire has recorded a public service announcement for NEA's Read Across America. McEntire also promotes First Book which offers free books to kids unable to afford their own reading materials.

Taking Reading to Task

One of NEA's top-priority initiatives is promoting reading, helping to make sure that all nine-year-olds are competent readers.

Toward that end, NEA has assembled a task force of members and reading specialists from around the country that will be presenting recommendations later this year. On the task force:

Becky Pringle, chair, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, rpringle@ezonline.com.

Keith Armour, second grade teacher, Cincinnati, Ohio, KEArmour@aol.com

Andy Baumgartner, 1999 National Teacher of the Year, kindergarten, Augusta, Georgia, abaumgar@doe.k12.ga.us.

Linda Cornwell, Indianapolis, Indiana, lcornwell@indy.net.

Cathy Powers Forbes, second grade teacher, South Mills, North Carolina, cforbes@coastalnet.com.

Janice James, 1999 Kentucky Teacher of the Year, 1-3 multi-level class, Louisville, Pricem04@bellsouth.net.

Michael Johnson, president, New Jersey Education Association, Mjohnson@NJEA.org.

Ginny Kalish, Arizona Teacher of the Year, second grade, Paradise Valley, gk0149@aol.com.

Greg Kurek, middle school teacher, Douglas, Michigan, Geoggreg@wmol.com.

Geri Marshall, middle school reading teacher, Grand Island, Nebraska, Gmarshal@genie.esu10.k12.ne.us.

Robin Nettinga, middle school reading teacher and president, Idaho Education Association, Boise, Rnettinga@nea.org.

Carolyn Olson, first grade Title I teacher and president, Auburn Education Association, Auburn, Washington, colson2@psesd.org. ✔

Should All Teachers Be Trained in the Teaching of Reading?

BECKY PRINGLE *teaches eighth grade physical science at Susquehanna Township Middle School in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. She's been teaching 23 years and currently chairs the NEA Task Force on Reading, which is developing a plan of action to guide the Association's reading initiative.*

yes

In the New Standards Primary Literacy Committee's publication, *Reading & Writing Grade by Grade*, the editors assert, "There is no educational matter as urgent as seeing to it that every American child becomes a competent reader and writer." I agree.

As an eighth grade physical science teacher, I know all too well the demands on my time.

I have a responsibility to teach science and to maximize every precious teaching moment toward that goal.

Yet teaching is more than explaining facts. The educational process itself is critical to a child's maturation. The absence of strong reading skills can stunt a child's entire developmental growth.

Teachers like me are expected to raise standards and test scores. Our response, as secondary teachers in content areas like science and math, has been to learn advanced teaching techniques and to expose our students to new technologies.

Yet, if our students lack this most vital learning tool—reading—our time is wasted.

Reading is a prerequisite to advanced thinking. My science students need to be able to do far more than merely recite the words on the pages of their textbooks. They need to be accomplished readers who understand philosophies, theories, and thought processes. They need to make predictions, interpret results, and draw conclusions.

All of these higher order thinking skills grow from reading proficiency. Current research has confirmed that secondary students still have reading skills to master, especially in the area of comprehension. Even average and superior readers need to perfect their reading abilities.

Our challenge is to integrate the essential skill that is reading into our curriculum, so we can improve achievement both in reading *and* the content areas.

Certainly, more can be done in pre-service training to prepare secondary teachers to provide reading instruction and help students become life-long, independent readers.

It's equally important to provide practicing teachers with professional development opportunities that help them see the importance of teaching reading, opportunities that provide them with instructional strategies that can help students become critical thinkers.

I realize that many *NEA Today* readers believe reading instruction is the sole responsibility of elementary teachers and reading specialists. Until five months ago, so did I.

In fact, had this debate question been posed to me at the start of this school year, I probably would have insisted on writing the opposing point of view. I would have said we secondary teachers are already trying to accomplish too much with limited resources and time.

But, over the past five months, I've had the great fortune to work with an extraordinary group of teachers, the members of NEA's Reading Task Force. These reading experts have forever changed my view of the role all teachers must play to ensure every student becomes a proficient reader. ✔

MARGARET PATTERSON *(her pen name is Terry Ward Tucker) holds a Ph.D. in reading education from the University of South Carolina, where she is writer in residence at the College of Education. She currently teaches general music at the Barr Street Middle School in Lancaster, South Carolina.*

no

The situation: Far away, there is a land populated by smart little creatures called zippits. It is a delightful land because zippits, who have evolved to the point that they need no mouths, talk to each other with their dancing feet. Everyone in the zippit community dances for joy when a little zippit learns a new tap dancing step.

Tapping is crucial in zippit land, for if you want to eat, you do not say, "I am hungry." You do a shuffle-ball-change and click your heels together. Then someone hands you an emu burger to put into your ear. (Remember, zippits have no mouths.)

The conflict: Everything was fine in zippit land until, one day, a zippit tap teacher was going over the choreography for the zippit version of "Dancin' in the Streets," and she spied a tiny zippit in the back who could not tap a word.

The good teacher ran down the hall and danced before the principal. "Something has to be done," she tapped, "or our zippit students will become known far and wide as clumsy, a fate worse than bunions in zippit land."

The principal two-stepped: "I have a great idea. We will give extra tap lessons to all our young zippits, even the ones who are already great tappers. We will make them practice until they blister their toes. And we will make all zippit teachers take extra training in teaching tap."

"But, sir," the teacher grapevined, "why train all teachers in the teaching of tap, and why force all students to practice tap until they get blisters on their toes? Do you think this will help all students achieve at higher levels in physical education classes, or advanced math classes, or band classes? And is there a zippit pot of gold that will pay for this training for all teachers?

"Why train the teachers who are already exhausting themselves just trying to teach their assigned subjects?

"Or the ones who are wondering if they should look for new jobs if add-ons to teaching keep multiplying exponentially?

"Or the ones from professions other than education who are willing to teach part-time in their areas of expertise to help out as the teacher shortage rages?

"Or the ones who want to decide for themselves what expertise they would like to develop instead of being forced to wear one-size-fits-all tap shoes?"

The resolution: "How dare you question my great idea?" stomped the principal.

"Your idea is unsound, sir," the teacher heel-and-toed. "Yes, parents of young zippits need to be trained in the teaching of tap, and, yes, early childhood and elementary teachers need to become experts, as should principals and tap specialists for all grade levels, as long as there are zippits who need extra help.

"But anyone who says all teachers should be trained, cult-like, in the teaching of tap when it is not practical to do so, given money and time constraints, needs to be descended upon by the zippit Rockettes and high-kicked to death. In other words—ZIPPIT!"

The end.

By the way, this goes for reading, too. ✔

What's Your Opinion?

Should all teachers be trained in the teaching of reading?
To vote on this month's Debate, go to www.nea.org/neatoday—and see the results instantly.

Will public education survive the next century?
The tally on this Debate question from the last issue of *NEA Today:*

60% Yes **40% No**

Little Steps, But a Long, Long Way To Go

Congress is spending millions on a billion-dollar problem: school safety. It's time for a new Congress.

Peter Gridley/FPG International

First, the good news about school safety. Despite tragic incidents over the past two years in schools from Springfield, Oregon to Littleton, Colorado, "school-associated violent deaths remain extremely rare events," U.S. Department of Education official William Modzeleski recently told the Senate Health, Education, and Labor Committee.

Modzeleski, director of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, reported that the "largest problem for schools—in magnitude—is not violent crime, but discipline issues and non-violent crime."

"American schools are relatively safe places," stresses NEA school safety lobbyist Jon Bernstein. "The number of kids caught and expelled for gun possession has dropped dramatically, and many states are taking the lead on gun control."

But this isn't the time to sit back. There are still guns in schools and still troubled kids who need help, and Congress has done precious little to address these problems.

In the wake of the Columbine High shootings, the Senate passed a juvenile justice bill, backed by NEA, that contains sensible gun safety measures. This bill, S. 254, would require child safety locks and devices on new handguns, outlaw juvenile possession of semiautomatic weapons, require background checks at gun shows and pawn shops, and ban the importation of high-capacity ammunition magazines.

"NEA members can make a *difference.* As the political season begins, let's hold elected people accountable on the issue of school safety."

—Jack Pacheco, NEA political affairs manager

But this legislation has been bottled up in a House-Senate conference committee since last summer, held hostage by fierce House resistance to any sort of gun control.

NEA backs the gun safety provisions of S. 254. But NEA is also calling for legislation holding adults responsible if a child gains access to an improperly stored, loaded firearm and uses it to commit a crime.

NEA, meanwhile, supports the removal of students who bring weapons to school, but NEA policy also calls for the placement of these children in alternative public school settings that meet their needs.

The gap, in short, remains wide between NEA and Congress on gun safety. Federal lawmakers did take some baby steps toward safer schools in the Fiscal Year 2000 budget. The final appropriations package includes:

- A $40 million increase for the Safe and Drug Free Schools Program, including a $15 million increase to train middle school safety and drug coordinators. Among the tasks of coordinators: help schools identify and adopt successful, research-based drug and violence prevention strategies.
- $45 million for a new small high school initiative designed

News Tips Welcome

Got news with an Association connection? Be it bargaining or legislative gains, the latest in professional development, or advances in school safety, all story leads are welcome. Send your tip to neatnews@list.nea.org or fax 202/822-7206.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"All schools need prevention programs that enable faculty to identify potentially troubled students and offer counseling or other resources to the students and their families. Teachers, administrators, and support personnel need training to recognize the early warning signs of potential violence. And schools need enhanced counseling and mental health services to help troubled students throughout their school years."

—Springfield, Oregon high school teacher Bill Smith, in testimony before Congress, May 1999

YOUR DUES DID IT

Computer Mice That Roared: E-mail messages from thousands of NEA-members, enlisted as "cyber-lobbyists" through www.nea.org/lac, helped persuade Congress to back off plans to slash education spending by 18 percent. Instead, the final Fiscal Year 2000 budget *increases* education funding by 6.2 percent. The budget maintains the federal class size reduction program and boosts funding for programs like IDEA, Title I, and safe and drug-free schools.

Paras Take Note: Some members of Congress wanted to eliminate Title I paraeducators, while others wanted arbitrary para mandates. But NEA lobbying helped win legislation that continues paras' role and allows their academic requirements to be shaped by local needs. More at www.nea.org/esp.

to enhance school safety. The money will enable districts to create schools within schools, establish career academies, or restructure the school day to increase personal attention to students.

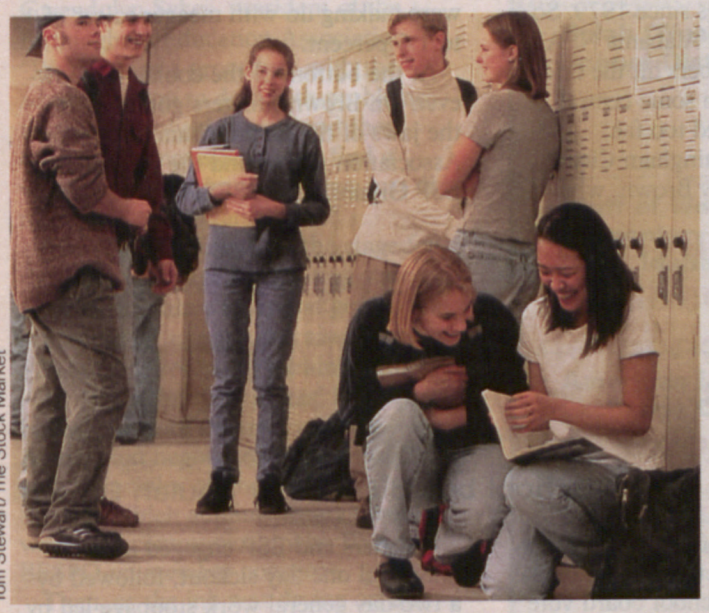
- A $20 million first-time program for elementary school counselors.
- Continuation of the $180 million FY 1999 funding level for school resource officers.
- A $254 million funding increase for 21st Century Learning Centers, or after-school programs. "Clearly, after-school hours are high-crime time," notes NEA lobbyist Joel Packer. "The purpose of this program is to provide a safe learning environment with academic support, mentoring, and drug and alcohol counseling."

But there's so much more Congress *should* be doing to make schools safer, stresses NEA chief lobbyist Diane Shust, "particularly in appropriating new money—not combining money from other sources—for school-based mental health services and the training of educators in identification of early warning signs of violent student behavior.

"Teachers get minimal training in child abuse," Shust adds, "even though there is mandatory reporting in each state of abuse and neglect. The unevenness of this training is paralleled by the lack of training in mental health issues. If you have mental services in place, kids will come to school ready to learn—we know they can be salvaged."

It may be that nothing can salvage the current Congress, which doesn't grasp the complexity of the student problems NEA members confront each day and how those problems impact learning and safety.

So here's the other good news on school safety: This November, every House seat and 33 Senate seats will be up for grabs. That's a chance to elect people more knowledgeable about modern schools and students.



Tom Stewart/The Stock Market

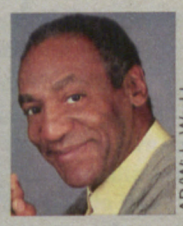
"As the political season begins," advises NEA political affairs manager Jack Pacheco, "we need to hold elected people accountable on the critical issue of school safety.

"Remember," he adds, "that two of every 100 people who walk into the voting booth in the general election will be NEA members. Given the close margin in contested seats in the last election, NEA members will be able to make a real difference. And where candidates stand on the school safety issue will determine how our members will vote." ✔

For more information from NEA on safe schools, go to www.nea.org/issues/safescho.

Heroes & Zeroes

▲ Bill Cosby's got his priorities straight. A recent episode of the "Cosby" show visited an alternative universe where *teachers*, not athletes, make millions of dollars, and educators live a lifestyle complete with groupies, shoe contracts, and school supply endorsements. "What we want to do with this show," says Cosby, "is really try to give some airpower to these teachers and superintendents and principals."



AP/Wide World

▼ ABC News correspondent John Stossel bashed public education big time in a recent "20/20" broadcast. Stossel alleged that "SAT scores are lower than they used to be," that the public school graduation rate is just 49 percent, and that only 20 percent of teachers feel prepared to teach to high standards. "Given the level of inaccuracy in Stossel's report," notes the watchdog group Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), "it's worthwhile to note the irony—an error-filled attack on the supposedly low standards of our public education system." Read more about Stossel at www.fair.org/activism/stossel-education.html.

▲ Reda Thurman, a fourth grade teacher at Albany (Kentucky) Elementary School administered the Heimlich maneuver and saved a 9-year-old from choking on a piece of a pencil. Lucky kid. Thurman is a former emergency medical technician—and a very typical teacher. "When I'm in here with these kids, they are my kids, and I watch them as I would my own," says this NEA member. "And I love them. They know that."

▼ At the start of a teacher salary dispute in New South Wales, Australia, state education and training director Ken Boston spent public money on newspaper ads that ridiculed and demeaned the profession. "Dr. Boston presented teachers as overpaid and underworked," reports local teacher leader Dick Shearman, "and he's now pushing to cut wages in real terms over the next four years and worsen the conditions under which teachers do their work."

15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

■ **The Goal:** Win allies in the campaign for safer, saner schools.

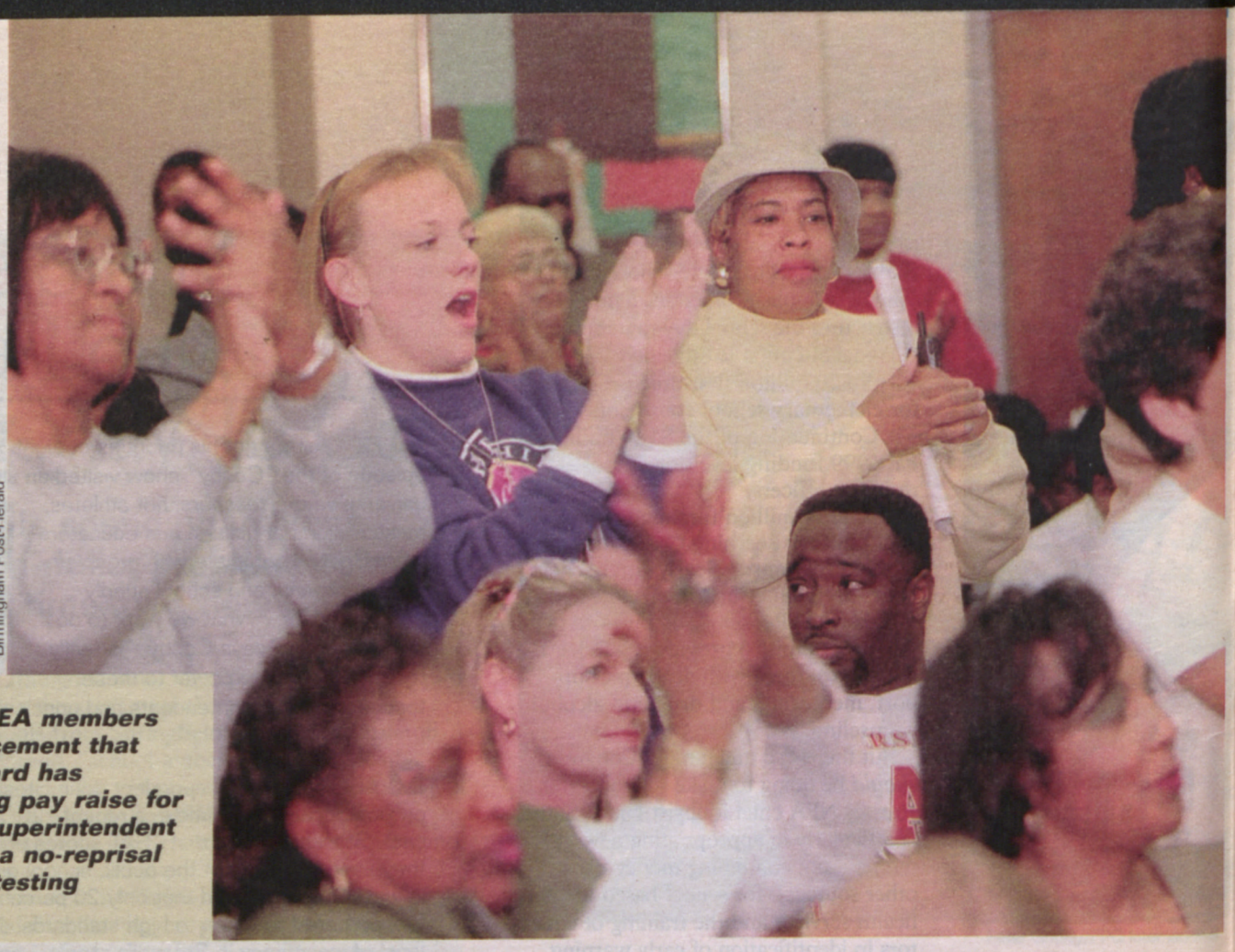
■ **Your Assignments:**

- Tell your members of Congress about the counseling and mental health services your school needs to help troubled children—and share this knowledge with PTA and school board members.
- Write letters to your local newspaper editor on the need for services to help troubled kids.
- Check out child advocacy coalitions in your community. If you like what you see, join!

■ **Here's how to get started:** Write a letter to your members of Congress at http://congress.nw.dc.us/nea/elecmail.html. ✔

Help For Troubled Kids?

If your district has an effective program for spotting early warning signs of potential student violence, we'd like to hear about it—and how it's funded. Send your tip to neatnews@list.nea.org or fax 202/822-7206.



Birmingham Post-Herald

Birmingham NEA members cheer announcement that the school board has rescinded a big pay raise for the district's superintendent and agreed to a no-reprisal clause for protesting employees.

KUDOS TO. . .

Walking in ESP Shoes

■ On November 17, members of three ESP locals in the **Escambia (Florida) NEA UniServ** council observed National ESP Day by inviting district and community leaders to "walk in our shoes" for a day. Nine visitors "walked" ESP jobs that day, and left highly impressed—and tired.

"It's good to have someone here to see what we do," says Escambia County bus driver Bonnie Brewton. "Then, when school board members and others start talking about privatizing our jobs, people will be able to compare what we do with what a private company says it will do."

■ The **Northeast Kingdom (Vermont) Elementary Teachers Association** has reached a settlement without a strike. The local published a newsletter for members scattered across 10 towns, opened a crisis headquarters, met privately with influential citizens, and urged subs and parents to honor any picket line. The payoff: raises of 3.19 percent this year, 5.6 percent in 2000-2001, and 4 percent in 2001-2002. And the pact boosts board-paid health care premiums from a capped dollar amount to a guaranteed percentage.

Caught in the Cookie Jar

In Birmingham, Alabama, teachers and ESP walk off the job, force school board to rescind superintendent's $30,000 raise.

Alabama, a state without a public sector bargaining law, has only seen five school employee strikes since 1979. So when Alabama NEA members hit the bricks, you know somebody in some central office has really reached too far.

Somebody like Birmingham City Superintendent Johnny Brown, who grasped in November for a $30,000 pay increase and a contract extension mandating a *unanimous* school board vote before he could be dismissed.

During a snap mid-day meeting, Birmingham school board members voted by 3-2 to accede to Brown's demands—while their schools were deteriorating, essential supplies and computers were lacking, and staffers were making do with meager raises of 1 to 1.5 percent.

At the bottom of the cookie jar, however, Dr. Brown's fingers got stuck in the jaws of the Birmingham Education Association (BEA) and the Birmingham ESP Organization (BESPO).

"They gave that man a huge raise behind closed doors and said, 'It's all about children.' We only asked them to rescind that raise. ESP love children, too."

—School bus dispatcher Beulah Brown

Teachers and ESP engaged in an unofficial one-day sickout, followed by a two-day general work stoppage led by Dr. Paul Hubbert, executive secretary of the Alabama Education Association.

By Day Two of the shutdown, not

THE BOTTOM LINE

NAMES: Anna, Brenda, and Margaret are three names now making a comeback, according to the latest birth-name records. In trend-setting California, the top five girls' names: Jessica, Ashley, Emily, Jennifer, and Samantha. For more: www.babynamer.com.

FAMILIES: Most families with kids will soon not include the original two parents. In 1972, 73 percent of children lived with their original parents. The latest figure: 52 percent. For more: www-news.uchicago.edu/releases/99/991124.family.shtml.

CRIMES AGAINST KIDS: Only 28 percent of violent crimes against children, says the U.S. Justice Department, are reported to police. Crimes against adults are more likely to be reported. For more: www.ncjrs.org/html/ojjdp/jjbul9911-3/report1.html.

CRIMES BY KIDS: The number of violent crimes committed by America's juveniles dropped 30 percent between 1994 and 1998. The total now stands at its lowest level since 1987. For more information: http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

one school bus rolled and 32,000 students stayed home.

By the end of that second day, November 10, the school board hurriedly rescinded Brown's contract addendum. The board also agreed to a no-reprisal clause covering employees who took part in the work stoppage—plus arbitration for non-tenured teachers who claim to be non-renewed because of participation in the walkout.

What brought Birmingham to this showdown?

"Our members had no voice," says Gwendolyn Sykes, president of the Birmingham Education Association. "We'd set up a procedure with the administration to deal with problems, think we resolved things, and then open up the newspaper and find a whole different situation—they just didn't respect our organization."

The superintendent set the stage for the work stoppage by ignoring state and district salary rules and getting the school board to approve raises of up to $20,000 for seven top administrators.

By November, employees' blood was boiling. To cool things down, the Association negotiated bonuses of $575 and "principles of understanding" through which administrators would work and communicate with BEA and BESPO on member concerns.

Then, as the ink was drying on that document, the superintendent got his fat raise. The job actions, which began almost immediately, succeeded because:

- **Members were fed up.** Besides the salary grabs, Birmingham teachers and ESP had witnessed an ever-expanding district bureaucracy, with no fewer than four "area executive directors." And worse, charges BEA President Sykes, top managers fostered an atmosphere of "intimidation and threats."
- **The community backed school employees.** BEA members helped parents and other local residents see the real problems of Birmingham schools, from tattered textbooks to falling ceiling tiles. Angered by the superintendent's raise, many parents joined the BEA/BESPO picket lines, served picketers food, and kept their kids away from the schools.
- **Bus drivers didn't drive.** The solidarity of Birmingham's 125 drivers, who guarded garage gates like Fort Knox, was instrumental in bringing the work stoppage to a quick conclusion.

"We are the first and last to see children each day, so we felt we had a major role in settling this," stresses Beulah Brown, the BESPO vice president. "A lot of times you can't get drivers to cooperate in the office, but they were 100 percent on the picket line!" ✔

For more information, contact Alabama Education Association staffer David Stout at DavidS@alaedu.org.

Do'ers Profile

John Miller

STEPHEN CHERNIN

- ***Name and profession:*** Stephen Chernin, food service worker.
- ***NEA local affiliate:*** Sunnyside Classified Employees Association in Arizona.
- ***Position:*** Local president.
- ***Latest accomplishment:*** I founded a new ESP local in Tucson. Our members, over 90 percent of whom are Hispanic, evaluated our agenda and decided we had different needs than teacher colleagues in the Sunnyside Education Association.

We took control of our destiny and formed our own local. But we still work closely with our sister local by attending board meetings together and brainstorming solutions to common problems. Now we can go at the administration from two sides!

We figured that, with a collective voice and the support and leadership training given by the Arizona Education Association, we would have a good chance of empowering ourselves.

My best achievement: recruiting my vice president and grievance chair Tony Silvain, who by himself has recruited over 100 members, and the classified committee that negotiates for ESP. A year ago in the SEA we had 89 ESP members. Now we're at 200-plus.

- ***Words of wisdom:*** Having a local with the backing of NEA and our state affiliate is a win-win situation for us. I'd advise ESP leaders contemplating a move like ours to ask: Are the members' needs being met? I can be E-mailed at sdchernin@edmail.com.

Report Card

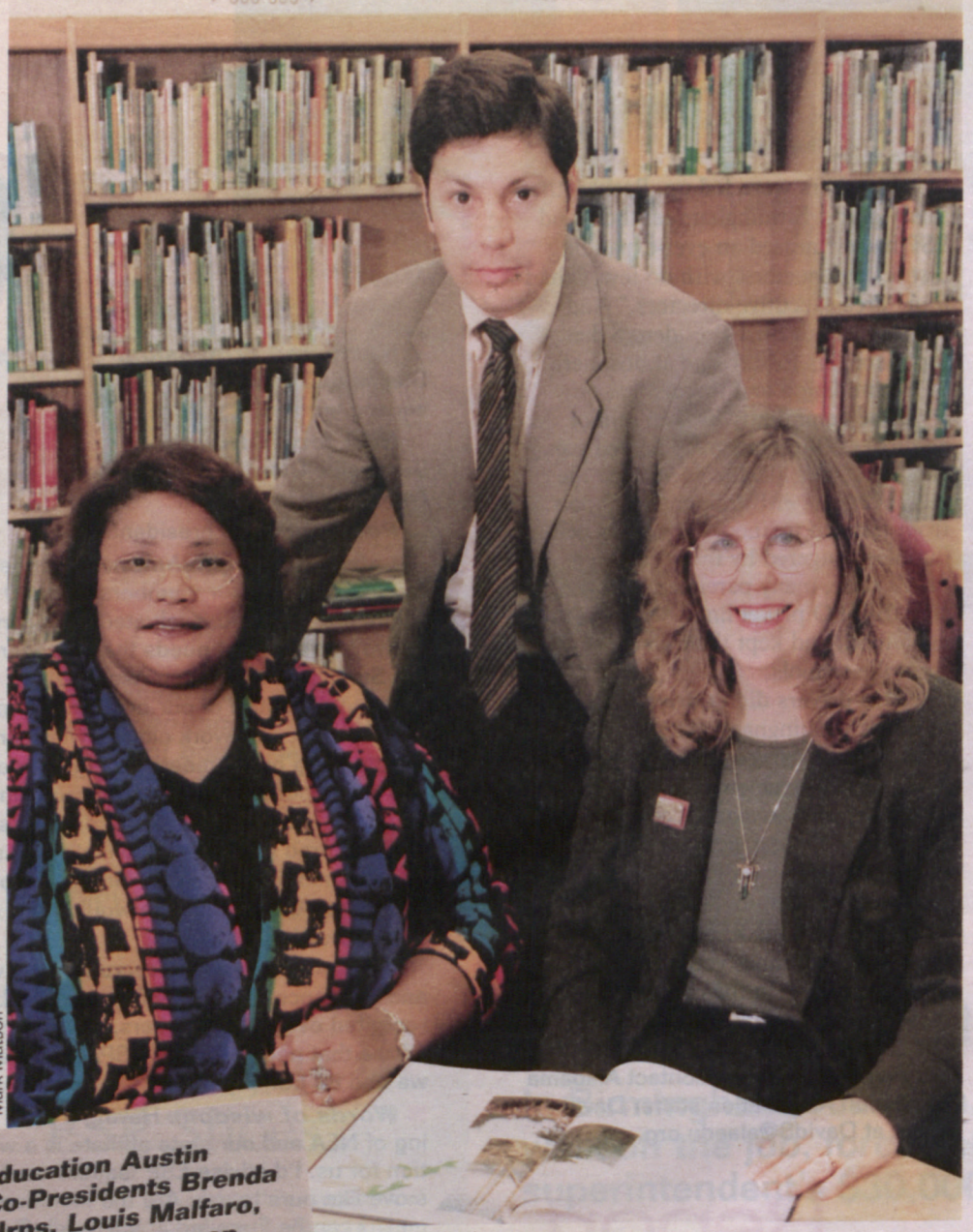
NAME	GRADE	COMMENTS
Selah (Washington) School District	*F*	Caught bullying. The Selah district has harassed teacher Art Green and ordered him to teach a subject for which he isn't certified—because of his leadership in his NEA local affiliate. The Washington Education Association has filed an unfair labor practice charge.
Staff of Westside Elementary in Idaho Falls, Idaho	*A+*	Honors for outstanding organizing. On November 12, Westside became the first school in the 106-year history of the Idaho Education Association to have *every* staffer enrolled as an IEA/NEA member—from the custodian and cafeteria workers to the nurse and principal.
American Legislative Exchange Council	*F*	This nationwide network of conservative state legislators has drafted a model "School Board Freedom to Contract Act" for introduction in every state. Recommendation: Contract out these lawmakers' jobs—*permanently*—to candidates who back public education.
University of Vermont	*Expel from campus*	In November, U-Vermont sponsored a nationwide seminar to train health care managers how to head off union organizing drives. Recommendation: a dialogue between university trustees and health care workers who pay Vermont taxes.

PRIORITIES: America's 50 states, reports the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, now spend more per year on prisons than on higher education, a complete about-face from a decade ago. For more: www.mcandmc.com/News/eisenhower.html.

MORE PRIORITIES: The United States, reports Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities, ranks number one in the world in military spending and number 10 in per student spending on education. For more: www.businessleaders.org.

KIDS IN SCHOOL: In 1900, only about one teenager in 10 attended high school. Now, a century later, 93 percent of all 14- to 17-year-olds in the United States are enrolled in school. For more: www.census.gov/prod/www/statistical-abstract-us.html.

READING: More and more businesses are contributing to literacy efforts, reports the U.S. Department of Education. Are your area employers involved? The Education Department has compiled a list. For more: www.ed.gov/pubs/ideasatwork/ch_4.html.



Mark Matson

Education Austin Co-Presidents Brenda Urps, Louis Malfaro, and Julie Bowman.

'We all care about the kids'

In Austin, Texas, local affiliates of NEA and AFT unite, become stronger, and attract lots of new members.

Competition among "service providers" has yielded appealing choices in long-distance calling and airline travel. But not, apparently, in union representation for the 9,500 school employees of Austin, Texas.

Until last spring, a large majority of Austin teachers and education support personnel stayed uncommitted while NEA and American Federation of Teachers local affiliates fought to win their hearts and minds.

You almost couldn't blame folks for sitting back as NEA Association reps and AFT building reps competed for their allegiance. Aside from some joint

Facts & Figures

Getting Mighty Big

As an NEA member, you've got lots of company. Total NEA membership mushroomed from 2,393,042 in the 1997-98 school year to 2,458,364 in 1998-99. By summer, over 2.5 million educators will be NEA members.

BASICS FOR BEGINNERS

Let's Not Get Physical

Neither current legal developments nor school district actions have fundamentally changed how teachers and support staff should relate to students.

"For many years," the Washington Education Association reminds its members, "school employees have been aware that any physical contact with students should be avoided."

Here are WEA's common-sense rules to prevent false claims of sexual abuse:

- Try not to be alone with students of either gender, particularly in isolated locations.
- Avoid physical contact with a student that could be misunderstood as sexual in nature.
- Avoid any written communications with students that could be construed as personal or romantic.
- Avoid off-the-cuff comments on students' physical appearance, or discussing personal topics that could be construed as sexual.
- If a student confides in you regarding a personal topic of a sexual nature, either invite another adult to join the conversation or immediately report the conversation in writing to a school counselor.
- If you or a colleague are accused of sexual harassment, take the charge seriously. Be sure to get competent advice before any questioning by the district or police. You have the right to Association representation in any meeting that could lead to discipline. In serious or potentially criminal cases, the Association will refer you to an attorney so that your case can be assessed.

For more information on protecting yourself from false student charges, contact your UniServ office. ✔

THE BOTTOM LINE

CLASS SIZE: Over 40 percent of the teachers hired in the first year of the Clinton Administration's Class Size Reduction Program are teaching first grade. For more: http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/ClassSize/localsuccess.html.

OBSTACLES TO LEARNING: The biggest threats to kids in the new millennium? The National League of Cities and the National School Boards Association cite poverty, child abuse and neglect, and violent crime. For more: www.nsba.org/highlights/ten_threats.htm

FOSTER CARE: New legislation signed into law in December will, for the first time, provide significant federal support for adolescents aging out of the foster care system. For more: www.cwla.org/publicpolicy/alrt112299.html.

DRUGS: The hottest concoctions on the party scene these days are "club drugs," stimulants that are supposed to deliver energy for dancing. The drugs, taken with alcohol, can be life-threatening, note federal authorities. For more: www.drugabuse.gov.

work on school board elections, the two organizations "spent years battling for membership," recalls special education teacher Brenda Urps, former president of the NEA local affiliate in Austin.

"A lot of times," adds Urps, "the administration would use this rivalry to divide us, and all that fighting took time away from dealing with the quality of education."

Sick of the squabbling, the district's NEA and AFT members voted last summer to unite into one organization, Education Austin. EA draws on the staff talent and benefits of both national unions.

"We just put the personalities and the history aside and got down to what's important: empowering educators."

—Education Austin Co-President Brenda Urps

The new organization is led by three strong co-presidents, heads of the old AFT support staff unit and the NEA and AFT teacher units, "leaders who have always been respected by the district," points out Urps, now an Education Austin co-president.

"Because we've combined forces," adds Co-President and former AFT teacher leader Louis Malfaro, "members see us as more powerful and know we speak out for them. And they know we have a new superintendent who is willing to work with us."

That perception of strength appeals to once-uncommitted educators. Some 1,200 have become first-time union members since the merger, edging Education Austin closer to its 1999-2000 target of 4,000 members.

Austin's stars are in alignment. On the heels of a $3,000 teacher raise won by NEA and AFT lobbyists in the state legislature, Austin teachers and ESP voted in October, by respective margins of 72 percent and 92 percent, to give Education Austin exclusive "consultation" rights with the administration.

In this process, union and management can discuss and reach written agreements on issues ranging from class size and workload to pay and benefits.

Thanks to this first-ever inclusion in the consultation process, Austin support staff now have the tools to build on a 5 percent raise they gained at the beginning of the school year.

Among ESP priorities at the table, says Education Austin Co-President Julie Bowman, will be the creation of a "step schedule" with experience credit, expansion of training opportunities, and stepped-up vigilance against privatization, especially in food services.

If anybody gambled in the Austin merger, it was the support staff. Bowman, a former bus driver, notes that some of her 850 classified members initially "feared being subsumed by all those teachers and asked if classified employee issues would still be important after the merger."

That won't be a problem. Education support staff will coordinate with teachers on consultation talks with the district, and ESP have gained full representation in the governance of Education Austin.

The new Austin local has big plans for the future. Now in the works:

- **More community outreach.** Education Austin is increasing its involvement in Partners in Education, a group that matches businesses and other stakeholder groups with schools.
- **Restoration of public confidence in Austin schools.** "We want to collaborate with the district and community to counter negative press about our schools," says Brenda Urps. "We want to promote and advance excellence."
- **Spreading the pride.** Count on Education Austin to publicize its members' ability to "meet the needs of this very diverse district," says Urps.

"We have a great, committed workforce," adds Co-President Bowman. "I'm impressed by the work of our members—the pride of custodians in their gleaming floors, the attachment of drivers to students, and the caring of cafeteria workers, who have nice things to say to kids, even when it's 100 degrees!"

"New members ask what took us so long to merge in Austin," notes Urps. "They said we all do the same thing and care about the same thing: the kids." ✔

For more information on Education Austin, visit the Web at www.educationaustin.org.

PRESS CLIPS

Lifting Spirits

From AFT's American Teacher, *January 2000:*

"The merger of the AFT's Austin, Texas local with its NEA counterpart has lifted the spirits of school employees in the Texas state capital. It also has been credited with setting the stage for Education Austin's successful bid to win exclusive consultation rights in October for the district's 9,500 teachers and classified employees.

"'Teachers and school support staff in Austin wanted a strong, united organization, and we've given them that in Education Austin,' says Julie Bowman, who served as co-president of the AFT affiliate. 'Each local's decision to merge stemmed from the spirit of cooperation that came out of the merger talks at the national level. We began working on small projects together and saw how much more effective we were when we worked together.'

"Bowman says the most challenging aspect of the merger was 'getting beyond the myths and stereotypes that each organization had about the other' and putting together a governance structure that would ensure that the merged union's various constituencies had a voice in its decision making." ✔

Back Talk

When they say: "I don't need a national education union to speak for me—just an independent association with cheap dues."

Think about this: In Texas, reports Education Austin Co-President Brenda Urps, one of the largest "independents" is dominated by school administrators. "Sort of like sending your boss in to consult with other bosses," she jokes.

"These organizations have no meaningful, effective local program," adds EA Co-President Julie Bowman. "They rarely come to school board meetings—maybe attending two sessions a year—and do nothing for ESP. In fact, not so long ago one of these groups favored privatizing custodial services, because it thought that would mean more money for teachers!"

ENVIRONMENT: In Massachusetts, where landlords are held liable for lead paint, children's blood lead levels are one third the rate in Rhode Island, a state without tough enforcement of anti-lead poisoning legislation. For more: www.aeclp.org/5/alert.html.

MEDIA: Two-thirds of America's kids over eight have a television in their bedroom, and one of every four of these kids spends at least five hours a day watching TV. Most kids say their parents have set no viewing rules. For more: www.kff.org/content/1999/1535/.

CIVICS: Three-quarters of 4th graders know that laws in the United States are intended to be applied to all equally. But only 15 percent can name two services funded by taxes. For more: http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/civics/civ_new_results.asp.

EMERGENCY LICENSES: A new California study documents that students scoring low on state achievement tests are much more likely to be in schools with large concentrations of teachers hired without professional credentials. For more: www.cftl.org.

RIGHTS WATCH

After the Shootings, the Lawsuits

Who should pay when the unthinkable happens?

All six of the fatal school shootings of the last two years have produced massive lawsuits by the victims' families.

Who are the families suing? School boards, principals, teachers, parents, students, gun makers, and even Hollywood.

■ In Jonesboro, Arkansas, the families of the four students and one teacher who were killed have sued the two shooters (age 11 and 13), their parents, the grandfather of one perpetrator (from whom they took the guns), and the two manufacturers of the guns.

The gun makers are liable, the families argue, because they failed to equip the guns with safety locks. And the grandfather should pay because he didn't keep the guns locked up.

■ The shooting of nine students, two fatally, in Pearl, Mississippi, prompted a lawsuit against the district, the police department, and the parents of students who belonged to the same satanic cult as the killer and allegedly knew of his plans. The school is liable, the families claim, because officials failed to act after reading the shooter's violent writings in his English class journal.

■ The parents of victims of Kip Kinkel's murderous rampage at Thurston High School in Springfield, Oregon, have sued him and his deceased parents' estate, claiming that the parents failed to exercise parental control and negligently gave him the rifle used in the school shootings.

■ In Edinboro, Pennsylvania, the family of teacher John Gillette has sued the 14-year-old who gunned him down at a school dance, along with his parents, claiming that they negligently gave their mentally disturbed minor child access to the handgun he used to commit the murder.

■ In West Paducah, Kentucky, the parents of several victims have filed two separate lawsuits. One against some 30 school officials, including school board members, teachers, and principals, claims that the 14-year-old killer had written two violent stories in school about killing "preppies." The claims against these defendants have been dismissed, but the plaintiffs say they plan to appeal.

A second lawsuit seeks more than $100 million in damages from some 25 media and entertainment companies for producing the violent movies and video games that allegedly taught and incited the perpetrator to kill.

■ And in Littleton, Colorado, the families of 18 victims have taken the first step in filing a civil lawsuit, notifying the county sheriff, the school district, and the killers' parents of their intent to sue.

Will any of these lawsuits succeed? That's hard to say, and the answer likely will vary from state to state.

Many school districts and their employees enjoy immunity from suit for injuries students suffer at school.

But several courts have recently allowed parents to sue school employees for their children's suicides, at least in cases where the employees had learned that the student was planning to commit suicide and did nothing. The same principle may be applied in the school shootings cases.

Last year, courts in Illinois, Georgia, New York, and California allowed victims of gun violence to sue the gun industry.

Borrowing a tactic from the tobacco litigation, 27 municipalities also have filed 17 lawsuits against gun makers.

Claims against video game and movie makers may also succeed. A Louisiana court last year allowed a shooting victim to sue the producers of the movie "Natural Born Killers." And one expert is certain that the Littleton families will sue the maker of Doom, the video game the two Columbine killers played obsessively, according to reports. ✔

—Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

Taking threats of violence seriously

In this post-Columbine era, the police are taking no chances. They're jailing virtually any student who threatens violence, "jokingly" or not.

■ In suburban Washington, D.C., two 10-years-olds were arrested on felony charges in December after they allegedly put soap in their teacher's water.

■ Last November, a seventh-grader from Ponder, Texas, was held in a juvenile detention for five days after the Halloween story he wrote for an English class described shooting his teacher and two classmates.

■ Last fall, in Wilmington, North Carolina, a jury convicted a teenager of "communicating threats" for typing "The end is near" on a high school computer soon after the Columbine tragedy. He claimed to be joking about Y2K.

■ An Atlanta high school student was jailed for three days last spring for writing in his journal about a deranged student who goes on a rampage at his school. The charge? Making "terrorist threats."

■ Police in Cleveland last October arrested four students and charged each with five felony counts arising out of an alleged plot to use guns and homemade bombs to kill teachers and students at South High School.

■ In November, a Michigan teenager charged with conspiracy to commit murder pleaded guilty to a lesser charge stemming from a plot to massacre classmates at a Port Huron middle school. Two other students in the plot are still awaiting trial.

■ And in Virginia Beach, Virginia, the police arrested a student for writing an essay that included a description of a student tying a nuclear bomb to himself. The charge was "threatening to bomb or burn."

Reasonable people can disagree over whether the police overreacted in these cases, but one thing is certain: School officials ought to monitor student behavior and take action if they believe that a student might commit acts of violence.

NEA last year sent every state affiliate a large packet of materials on stopping school violence. Additional information about keeping schools safe appears on the NEA Web page at www.nea.org/issues/safescho/.

THE BOTTOM LINE

CAPITAL CLOUT: NEA is the ninth most influential group in the nation's capital, according to a survey of Washington political insiders conducted by the national business magazine, *Fortune*. For more: www.pathfinder.com/fortune/archive/.

COLLEGE TUITION: Costs to study at private colleges are up almost 5 percent this academic year, about double inflation. Average private tuition: $15,380. Average public four-year: $3,356. For more: www.collegeboard.org/press/cost99/html/991005.html.

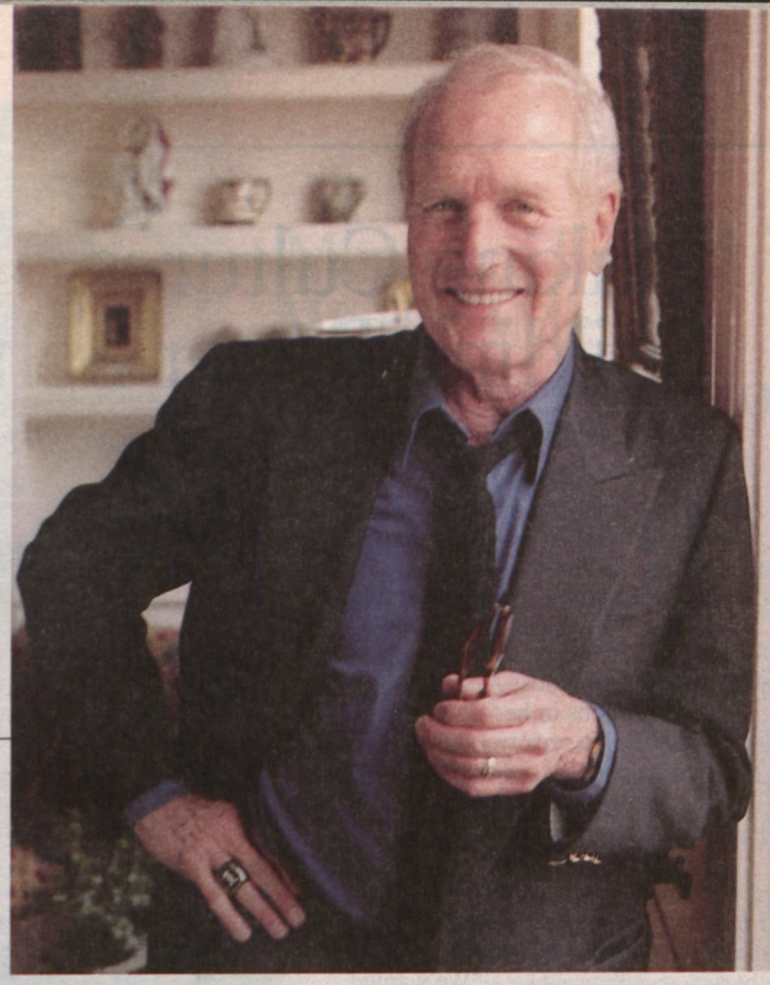
TECHNOLOGY: Nearly a quarter of the nation's teachers, 23 percent, report receiving no training at all last year on how to use technology to improve instruction. Ten percent received over 20 hours of training. For more: www.schooldata.com/pr19.html.

CYBERSPACE: A survey of the nation's 86,700 public schools, released late in 1999, shows that 90 percent of K-12 buildings now have Internet access, up from 70 percent in 1997. For more: www.schooldata.com/pr18.html.

INTERVIEW

Paul Newman Working for New Priorities

Actor and businessman Paul Newman is joining with business leaders across the nation to urge a greater investment in education.



AP/Wide World

It's lunchtime at the Daytona Speedway in Florida, and actor, businessman, and race car driver Paul Newman is in a race against time. During a small window of quiet, Newman tapes a television ad for the new national group, Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities, an effort led by Ben & Jerry's co-founder Ben Cohen.

Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities is now launching a massive media campaign that calls for the reallocation of precious federal funds from the Pentagon to domestic programs like education and health care for children.

For Newman and other business leaders involved in the campaign, it's time to get the message out about unnecessary Pentagon spending and the need to shift the nation's federal budget priorities. Newman spoke briefly recently with *NEA Today's* Anita Merina.

Q: Why have you joined the Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities campaign?
Because I just had my first two grandchildren. I want them to have a future filled with opportunity and the best education possible. But not every child is as lucky.

About fifty cents out of every discretionary dollar spent by Congress now go to the Pentagon budget, while just six cents go to educating our children and four cents go to health care. That's too much for Pentagon defense contractors and too little for our children's education and our families' health care.

The only way we can give our children the best education in the world and prepare them for the next century is by funding the programs that serve them.

Q: Over the years, other groups have tried to lobby for cuts in military spending. Why makes you think Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities will be successful?
Just because you come up against a wall doesn't mean you quit. I think, little by little, people are beginning to understand there's a lot of pork out there, in almost every area.

Building weapons that we don't need, don't work, and aren't necessary, and have no mission—that's not bad politics, that's robbery.

Q: Those who want to keep military spending high say the nation can't afford to make cutbacks that would risk our national security. What do you say?
Retired Vice-Admiral John Shanahan, the head of our business leader committee of military advisors, is the man with the numbers. He says we have enough warheads in our arsenal to destroy every major city on the planet 10 times over.

If we reduce that arsenal so that we could destroy every major city on the planet only four times over, we'd save $15 billion a year, every year.

That could buy a lot of education for a lot of kids.

Q: What do you hope educators will do?
Continue teaching good values to all your students. Help them recognize the priorities we need to have to keep this nation competitive and strong.

RESOURCES

- For more about Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities, go to www.moveourmoney.org.
- A new national poll shows that both women and men agree that Congress should invest more in education and health care and cut wasteful weapons spending. For more, go to www.sensiblepriorities.org.
- Interested in learning more details about current military spending levels? The Washington, D.C.-based Center for Defense Information is an organization run by retired admirals and generals who are concerned about wasteful and unnecessary Pentagon spending. For more, check the CDI Web site at www.cdi.org.

Paul Newman is one of more than 500 business executives who have joined the Sensible Priorities Campaign, explains campaign staffer (and former NEA staffer) Virginia Witt:

Q: Who's involved in the Sensible Priorities work?
Many of the top names in business make up the ranks of Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities, and a number of retired senior officers are part of the effort, too.

Our senior military advisors understand that we can defend our national interests, against all conceivable threats, for a lot less than we are spending now, and our business leaders know that investing in domestic programs like education will keep our nation strong.

Q: What do you hope to accomplish?
We're out to convince the politicians and Presidential candidates that the nation needs to shift 15 percent out of the Pentagon budget for contractors and weapons manufacturers and invest this savings in education, health care, and state and local programs that support children.

For the cost of one F22 fighter plane—$188 million—we can build 20 new schools. For the $15 billion a year savings we'd gain by reducing nuclear weapons, we could enroll every eligible child in Head Start and cover every uninsured child in America.

BLSP members are using their expertise as marketers, business leaders, and military leaders to arm Americans with information and let the people know the real facts.

Q: How much military spending waste is there?
There's a lot of waste in the Pentagon budget. It's not just the legendary $640 toilet seat. The Pentagon cannot account for $43 billion of its budget over the last decade.

According to the General Accounting Office, the Pentagon books are so bad that they can't even be audited. And the Pentagon continues to receive billions more than it asks for.

Q: The Sensible Priorities Campaign is targeting the public outside the Washington beltway. Why?
Because that's where the campaign needs to be—out in the communities. This is a grassroots, community effort. It's the people who need to raise their voices and send a message to the politicians.

Q: What can average citizens do?
Get informed. There's a report about defense spending on our Web site, written by Dr. Lawrence Korb, former assistant secretary of defense under President Reagan. Find out what the facts are and take a stand.

Learning

Linking Cultures, Building Better Schools

In Philadelphia, an educator helps Asian American kids forge connections and find themselves.

Realizing the need for an "activist pan-Asian group that could address social justice issues," educator-activist **Debbi Wei** in 1985 co-founded Asian Americans United.

Back then, most Asian organizations in her Philadelphia area were identified by country or focused on the needs of either recent arrivals or long-term residents, remembers Wei, a curriculum specialist in Asian Pacific American studies for the Philadelphia city schools.

John Secoges

"We wanted to link across ethnicity," says Wei, "and to help the most disenfranchised."

When Asian Americans United started, Wei, who is Chinese American, was an English-as-a-second-language teacher organizing in the neighborhood where she lived and worked.

"I felt committed to my kids and their families," Wei says. "I see my role as an educator holistically. In Asia, teachers are viewed as a second parent, but that respect comes with responsibility."

In 1986, Wei's fledgling group began addressing student issues. Involving students was also a good way to organize the Asian community across disparate cultures and languages.

"The young people learning English had common denominators—a Vietnamese kid, a Chinese kid, and a Lao kid could all speak English, and they were all growing up here and understood racism," Wei recalls. "From the start, the youth wanted their home language respected at their schools and to see themselves in the curriculum."

Impact:
In the mid-1980s, Asian Americans United filed a class action lawsuit charging that Asians in the area weren't getting an equitable education, because bilingual education wasn't offered.

The case eventually resulted in the creation of "sheltered" ESL classes, where ESL students could take all their subjects together. The outcome, to Wei, was not ideal, but the new arrangement did help students speaking little to no English who couldn't keep up in the regular classroom.

After the case, Asian Americans United continued to fight for bilingual ed, and, two years ago, the district finally started a small Asian bilingual program in two languages.

Teenagers belonging to Asian Americans United's Community Youth Leadership Project currently mentor younger kids and help organize community projects. With their help, the group recently won bus transportation to a bilingual school serving children in Chinatown.

For More:
Write to Asian Americans United, 913 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107, contact 215/925-1538, or send E-mail to aaunited@critpath.org. ✔

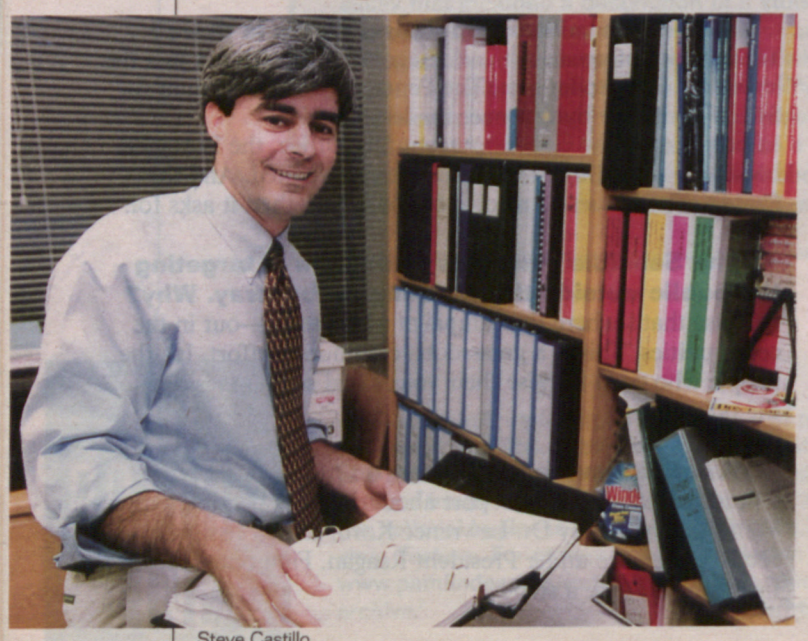
Trends

When it comes to getting students new to speaking English proficient in the language, most politicians and policy wonks agree that three years is sufficient, according to a recent article in *Education Week*.

Supporters of the time frame include the Clinton administration, House Democrats and Republicans, and most state officials with a position on the issue.

But education researchers say it takes four to six years to become proficient and called the three-year mark "arbitrary" and unproven.

TV and Kids: Not Always A Good Mix



Steve Castillo

Innovator: Tom Robinson

Job:
Assistant professor of pediatrics and medicine at Stanford University

Bright Idea:
In a recent study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Robinson found that American children are getting fatter because they spend too much time watching TV, playing video games, and engaging in other sedentary activities.

The link between obesity and children's viewing habits may seem obvious, but other studies previously conducted on the topic had found only a weak relationship, Robinson notes.

Robinson's study took a novel approach. He sought to change student viewing habits before measuring their weight. He also developed an 18-lesson curriculum giving students a major role in determining their own TV watching.

The study started with third and fourth graders at two San Jose elementary schools monitoring their TV viewing for a week. The students were then challenged to go 10 days without any TV at all.

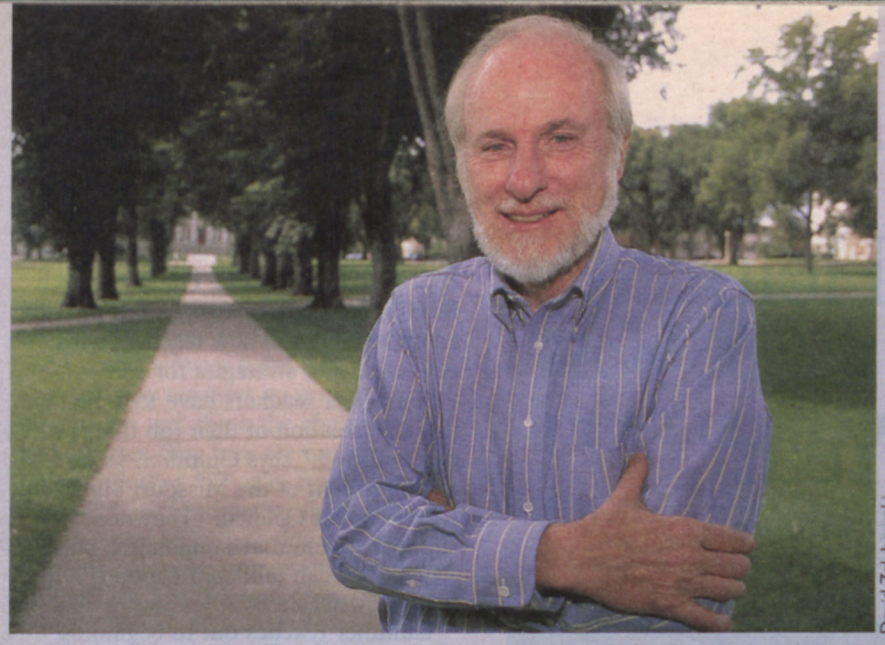
About two-thirds succeeded. For the next six months, teachers collected weekly SMART (Student Media Awareness to Reduce Television) slips, which indicated how closely students came to meeting a personal budget of daily TV watching.

Six months later, Robinson found reduced weight gain among these students, compared to a control group at a school with similar demographics.

Impact:
The teachers in this study had a big impact on their kids' TV viewing and, as a result, their health, says Robinson, "a bigger impact than I have as a single pediatrician."

Robinson hopes to have both school and parent versions of the curriculum available for distribution by next fall.

For More:
Contact Robinson at trobinson@scrdp.stanford.edu. To read his study, visit http://jama.ama-assn.org/issues/v282n16/full/joc90434.html



David Zalubowski

Teachers as Actors at the Head of the Class

For almost 20 years Dr. Morris U. Burns, professor of theater at Colorado State University, has given workshops across the country with his colleague Dr. Porter Wood, helping teachers explore the connection between acting and teaching. In 1992, Burns and Wood co-wrote Teacher as Actor.

What's the initial reaction of teachers to your "acting" workshops?
There's an element of fear, but teachers like it once they realize we're not trying to turn them into actors. We're just helping them expand the skills they already have. After all, teachers are already involved in public performance.

Give an example of an acting technique that could work in the classroom?
First, develop an awareness of how you can project feeling to your audience. The number one feeling teachers need to project is enthusiasm. It can be as simple as focusing on how you hand out papers or use a pointer. For an actor, nothing's done physically that's not important. Even simple actions can communicate boredom or enthusiasm.

It's not uncommon for teachers to get bored. It happens to actors who play the same role repeatedly. Try this technique. Ask yourself, if I were excited about doing this, what would I do? Recall a time when you were excited and draw on those feelings.

How can thinking like an actor impact discipline, learning?
Just as actors reserve part of their consciousness to observe the audience, teachers need to be aware of student reactions.

If kids lose focus, take time out for exercises. Before class, rearrange physical space, putting desks in a circle to create more openness and energy. If you lecture in front of the class, try exploring students' physical space. At different times of day, change your normal ritual to grab the students' attention.

What about feedback?
Some actors develop a core of other actors who watch performances and give feedback. As teachers, we're pretty protective of ourselves. It would be valuable to develop, as a group, a way to guide each other and give feedback.

For More:
E-mail Morris Burns at mburns@vines.colostate.edu to order *Teacher as Actor* ($16.95) or to get information on his acting workshops. ✔

NEA Innovators

If the Teacher Education Initiative (TEI) had to be summed up in one word, it would be "collaboration," says NEA's Sylvia Seidel, who directs the program.

Now in its fifth year, TEI is devoted to transforming teacher education through partnerships among schools, universities, the Association, and its affiliates.

The initiative takes the best practices from current research and tests them in professional development schools (PDSs). "PDSs provide a reality-based training experience for teachers-to-be and rich [research] opportunities for educational professionals," says Seidel.

For a copy of *Teaching to Teach: New Partnerships in Teacher Education* ($16.95, Item #2083-9-00-F), a new NEA book based on TEI findings, call 800/229-4200 or visit www.nea.org/books.

Members Behind Works 4Me Work Overtime for You

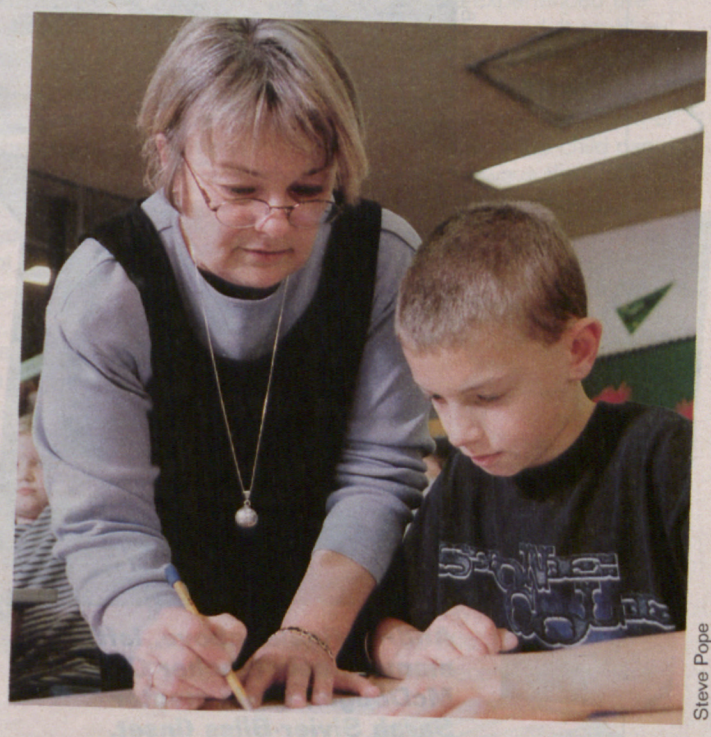
Innovator: Susie Olesen

Job:
Special education teacher and curriculum director at Greenfield Elementary and High Schools, Greenfield, Iowa

Bright Idea:
Three years ago, Susie Olesen brought her passion for networking with other teachers to the Internet. That's when NEA created Works4Me, a free weekly E-mail that features practical teaching tips. Olesen, a classroom veteran, volunteered to help launch the program.

"Three of us got started giving tips ourselves and asking for suggestions from friends," she recalls.

The volunteers would then edit the tips into the weekly Works4Me E-mails. As word spread about the weekly E-mails, more and more teachers began signing up to receive Works4Me, and the wider audience started generating more and more tips. Works4Me subscribers are now contributing



Steve Pope

as many as 40 tips in a single week.

All the tips circulated through the Works4Me E-mail list are also available at the NEA Web site. The Works4Me area offers tips on topics ranging from teaching techniques to managing your classroom.

Tips come from teachers who've tested the ideas in their classrooms, says Olesen, who helps determine site content. Those educators who want to have in-depth discussions about topics—ranging from Shakespeare to guided reading—can join "threaded" discussion groups.

"Teachers often are isolated and need to feel connected with other teachers and their ideas," says Olesen. "Works4Me provides that opportunity."

Impact:
When it started in 1997, Works4Me had about 20 subscribers to its E-mail list. At last count the number had grown to 23,759. One recent tip featured on the Works4Me Web site was downloaded approximately 10,000 times.

"The power of teachers being connected with each other is not to be diminished," Olesen says. "Together we have far more ideas than apart."

For More:
Visit http://www.nea.org/helpfrom/growing/.

New Teachers Help One Another Through First Year

This Missouri district doesn't believe in a sink-or-swim philosophy.

Photos by Mary Butkus

Andrea Rable (above, left) mentors new teacher Cari McDougal, while mentor Sarah Sivier-Bliss (inset, left) and Julie Artman discuss a classroom problem.

Recruitment and retention of teachers is as much a problem in Missouri as it is nationwide. So in 1993, when Chris Guinther transferred from teacher to curriculum and instruction facilitator for the Francis Howell School District, helping new teachers survive their first year became a top priority for her.

Impressed by a neighboring district's Beginning Teacher Network (BTN)—sponsored by the local NEA affiliate—Guinther convinced her district and local Association to co-sponsor a similar program. Now in its seventh year, the resulting Francis Howell Beginning Teacher Network has provided more than 400 new teachers with new ideas and strategies for success.

"First-year teachers have told me that it is the isolation of their job that is so demoralizing," says Guinther, who's also president of the Missouri Staff Development Council. "They need a support system that's ongoing, a place where they can talk confidentially with other new teachers."

Guinther reaches out to beginning teachers as soon as they're hired by the district. She sends the new teachers a greeting letter, inviting them to join the network.

"I tell them that we want them to be successful in their first year," explains Guinther, "and that the Beginning Teacher Network is an addition to the state's mandatory program of mentoring by an experienced teacher."

Beginning Teacher Network meetings, adds Guinther, offer "a safe place where teachers can ask for help or say, without fear, that they don't know what to do next or even ask next."

This year, about 50 new teachers are participating in the year-long program, which will be evaluated by both new teachers and their BTN mentors. With the evaluation work, says Guinther, "we can modify the focus of the program as we go along."

For Cari McDougal, the monthly Beginning Teacher Network meetings provide a solid source of "support, inspiration, and information." The program, says this first-year teacher at Becky David Elementary in St. Charles, has taught her how to manage her time and her students' behavior.

The Beginning Teacher Network, McDougal adds, has even helped her with parent conferences, teaching her how to begin exchanges with parents on a positive note before stating any problem.

First-year teacher McDougal also followed the network's suggestion to call parents within the first week or two of school. Parents were "surprised

How I Did It

Bonnie Barber
Special ed teacher
San Jose, California

I've worked with the developmentally disabled, both in and outside the classroom, since I was a teenager. I've also coached basketball, track and field, bowling, and soccer for the Special Olympics. But it was a first for all involved when a soccer team I coached represented the United States at the 1999 International Special Olympics last June in North Carolina.

José Villegas

Our team consisted of 15 young adults, from ages 18 to 23. Most of them were either in or had graduated from my special education class at Pioneer High School.

After winning two qualifying games, we tied with three other teams for the chance to play in the international games. So officials put our names in a hat and drew ours.

Special Olympics paid for most of our costs, but we had a lot of community support. A health club let us work out in their gym every week with their personal trainers, the local soccer team taught us warm-up techniques, and Pioneer's most avid soccer-playing students gave us pointers.

Our students learned so much at the games, and everyone earned a participation medal. They had to follow directions, live independently and interdependently in dorms, and work with unfamiliar authority figures. Seven Olympians are graduating this year, and I see lasting effects—namely increased self-esteem—in them.

but pleased" to be contacted.

"I found out more about my students—their allergies, who they shouldn't be sitting next to," McDougal says, "and it was all very helpful."

"First-year teachers go into their classrooms and think the challenges and stresses they face are unique," notes Guinther. "They're frustrated and overwhelmed, and we let them know, through our activities with experienced teachers, that they're not alone and that all teachers feel this way from time to time."

Topics at Beginning Teacher Network meetings range from motivating students and prioritizing tasks to mainstreaming special education students. Sessions teach both classroom survival skills and life skills such as financial management, says Guinther, who brings in a speaker from the NEA Member Benefits program each year.

Teachers attending the Beginning Teacher Network sessions get plenty of refreshments—and have fun, too. They compete for door prizes, everything from books like Harry Wong's *First Days of School* to Dr. Seuss ties, "school bus" bookends, desk organizers, book bags, bulletin board materials, and games for indoor recess.

The program's refreshments and prizes are funded by the Francis Howell NEA local and the school district's Professional Development Committee.

Natalie Lacey, a first-year fifth grade teacher at Central Elementary, says that the best part of the Beginning Teacher Network program has been learning how to keep her students under control.

"I don't know that I would have known to do this," says Lacey, "if it wasn't for the Beginning Teacher Network."

For second-grade teacher Amy Nichols—now a second-year teacher—the program has "lessened the isolation and helped me know that the stress I feel is not because I'm not good at my job. It's something others are also going through."

The best way to sum up the success of the Francis Howell Beginning Teacher Network? Guinther likes to share an anecdote from a BTN teacher whose friend quit teaching after her first year.

"The difference between what I had and what my friend had was a support network," the member noted. "If she had had what I had, maybe she'd be back teaching."

Recommended Reading

- ***Bright Ideas: A Pocket Mentor for Beginning Teachers***, **by Mary C. Clement (NEA Professional Library, Item #2153-3-00-PL, $4.50 for NEA members).**
- ***The First Days of School: How to Be an Effective Teacher***, **by Harry K. Wong and Rosemary T. Wong (Harry Wong Publications, $29.95).**

For more, contact Chris Guinther at mosped@aol.com.

[DILEMMA]

How do you support students whose parents are getting divorced?

I try to listen to what they're saying and how they feel. If they want my opinion, I offer it. I believe they need to share how they feel and to know their teacher cares. They also need to be reassured that everyone—including their mother, father, and teacher—still loves them.

Mary Heil-Allen
High school teacher
Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin

■ I teach high school and have had numerous students whose parents were going through a divorce. Some students have come from homes where abuse has taken place, others where drugs and alcohol have been a major factor, and others where families have been abandoned.

It's never easy to deal with children who are suffering, and sometimes they don't want to tell you what is really bothering them. Many withdraw and want to be left alone. Some want to talk and vent their feelings. Others are angry and exhibit hostility. Virtually all are very deeply hurt and just want someone to listen, show concern, and care.

I try to do what I can by making a special effort to reach out and talk to them each day when I am aware of family problems. I also encourage them to talk with a guidance counselor or a friend.

Marjorie Rios
High school teacher
Livingston, Tennessee

■ Don't take sides, but hear what they have to say. You might try to get them involved in a phase of your classroom work so that they have some organization in their lives during this period.

Carl Witte
Retired high school teacher
Harrison, Michigan

■ Children tend to blame themselves when their parents separate and divorce. Listening to them and allowing them to talk about their frustrations is important. Connecting them with another student who has gone through a similar situation also may help. Like adults, they need to know that they are not alone. Talking to someone their age validates their feelings.

Most times, one of the parents will speak to me about the impending divorce. That's the perfect time to remind them to talk to their children. I stress how important it is to constantly let children know they are loved by both parents and they are not to blame for the divorce.

Ann Paoletti
Sixth grade teacher
Port Orchard, Washington

■ I try to reassure the child that there are other students at school who have experienced the same thing and that divorce is an adult problem having nothing to do with a child's behavior.

We explain that both parents still love their child but find that they can't comfortably live together anymore and that there's nothing the child can do to change that. We talk about ways the child can still see both parents, even if one is moving far away. Some children find it helpful to make a little journal where they can write and/or draw their feelings about the divorce. I then encourage them to share their journal with both parents so they can talk further about it.

Kathy Miller
Elementary school counselor
Brookings, South Dakota

Got An Answer?

How do you keep students from cheating?

Send your answer by fax to 202/822-7206 or by E-mail to dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Include your name, city, state, job title, and grade level. Published respondents will receive a new *NEA Today* mug!

Ted Pitts

The Goal: National Board Certification

Two veteran Ohio elementary teachers seek the teaching profession's top hallmark of quality.

Fewer than 5,000 teachers across the country have so far met the rigorous requirements for National Board Certification.

That's not surprising. Becoming nationally certified takes lots of study, honest self-evaluation, and a high tolerance for stress.

It's difficult enough for one teacher to undertake the voluntary national certification process, even with the support of understanding family and colleagues.

In Mansfield, Ohio, teachers Chuk and Beki Dorka decided to double that difficulty. In 1996, they *both* started down the road to national certification, together.

Today, more than three years later, Chuk and Beki have finally achieved their goals, and their experience can help any educator considering the national certification process.

Chuk and Beki each have over 20 years teaching. To them, the virtues of national certification are self-evident.

"National standards are really about what constitutes excellence in teaching," says Chuk, who's 48. "Every teacher can benefit from a process with this kind of focus."

The cost of applying for national certification, fortunately, was not an obstacle for the Dorkas. Ohio pays the $2,000 fee for the certification process—and rewards each nationally certified teacher with a $2,500 yearly bonus.

Their first obstacle turned out to be the sheer volume of the work required to become nationally certified.

Ken Love

Chuk and Beki Dorka, both veteran teachers, earned their National Board Certification—an arduous but rewarding process.

After filing their applications, the two received the box of materials necessary to complete the process. Chuk, a sixth grade teacher at Dowds Elementary in Shelby, was overwhelmed.

"I wasn't expecting the kind of depth the process demands," he remembers.

As a first step, Beki posted a giant calendar in the basement with self-imposed early deadlines.

"I have to have everything all lined up," laughs Beki, a 49-year-old fourth grade teacher at Ranchwood Elementary. "Chuk has piles."

One big part of the national certification process involves putting together a professional portfolio. Each portfolio

Idea Exchange

Student Slates

Our maintenance department is replacing all the old chalkboards with 4' x 8' tile board. I asked the maintenance department to cut one of these boards into 12" squares, which gave me 32 new white board slates. Now students each have their own slate to use when we practice math facts, do math visualizations on the overhead, and practice handwriting.

To ensure that we always have enough white-board markers, I occasionally send a note home to parents explaining that we're running low. To solve the problem of passing out an eraser for each child, I collected old clean socks. My students keep their markers in the socks and when we need to use the slates, everything is in their desks and ready to go.

Debi Beckman
Asheville, North Carolina

Baby Books

My high school class created books about child development and literacy for families with new babies to take home from the hospital. Students researched and wrote sections on the importance of reading to young children, immunizations, toy selection, and developmental stages. First graders created the cover illustrations.

Our project educated new parents—and increased my students' knowledge of the importance of good parenting.

Judi Raasch
Greenfield, Iowa

Wallpaper Backgrounds

I use wallpaper for backgrounds on my bulletin boards. It's fast to put up, doesn't fade, and doesn't show staple holes. In the summer, I look for wallpaper on sale and put wallpaper on my bulletin boards first thing in the fall.

If I want a different background later, I just put it over the wall-paper. Then, when I take the special background down, the wallpaper is ready to go.

Jill Irey
Lake City, Michigan

Works4Me
NEA's e-mail classroom tip of the week!

Have a great idea? Fax it to *NEA Today* at 202/822-7206 or E-mail: ideas@neatoday.nea.org. For more tips from NEA's weekly E-mail service, Works4Me, send an E-mail to lyris@list.nea.org.

- In the "subject" line, type: sign me up, NEA!
- In the message block, type: subscribe Works4Me
- Send the message.

To submit a tip, E-mail it to: owner-Works4Me@list.nea.org.

needs to include videos of classroom lessons, self-evaluations of these lessons, logs of professional development activities, and much more. It all amounts to a huge writing job.

"If you're honest," says Chuk, "you can find something about your teaching in the video that needs improvement."

Doing the self-evaluations for the portfolios demands that candidates "come to grips with what the kids see every day," adds Beki.

The self-evaluations Chuk did led to direct changes in his teaching style.

"There's so much to do, so much to cover, that I think I'd become too intense," says Chuk. "I saw places on the tape where I wanted to put more joy back into what I was doing, not to be on such a steamroller. We do less now, but we do less better."

During the months-long process, Chuk and Beki argued, read everything the other wrote, and tried not to lose their senses of humor. But things sometimes got too intense.

"Then Chuk would go do laundry, and I'd do stained glass," says Beki.

At Beki's insistence, Chuk ended up redoing his first videotape. He had taped a lesson where he wore antlers in the classroom.

"Beki thought that people who didn't know me would think I was performing just for the tape," says Chuk, who once ate worms to help demonstrate the various sources of protein.

In the end, Chuk passed on his first attempt at national certification, in the early adolescence generalist field. Beki made three attempts, finally becoming certified as a middle childhood generalist last November.

"Every teacher can benefit from a process with this kind of focus."

On her second attempt, Beki missed becoming certified by only a point.

"We cried for two hours," says Chuk.

Fortunately, the certification process is divided into several parts, and participants are given four years to "bank" their strongest areas and redo only weaker sections. That flexibility meant that Beki did not have to repeat the entire process all over again.

"Students and parents were part of this process," says Beki. "It was hard to go back and tell them I didn't do my job well enough. They all felt bad. Now I can say, I told you I could do this. I didn't give up." ✔

For more information: See the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Web site at www.nbpts.org. To apply for National Board Certification or to request more information, call 1-800-22TEACH.

[DILEMMA]

What do you do when the administration doesn't back you up on discipline?

When administrators do not back me in discipline situations, I write a grievance. My teaching contract calls for support in these situations, so that I can perform my primary duty—teaching students!

Mary Boulanger
Secondary science educator
Holt, Michigan

■ From the first day of school, I set rules with strict consequences for students. I set my consequences as if I did not have the backing of administrators.

To show students I mean business, I don't give them many chances between warnings and the consequences. I also send my rules home to parents, who have to read them to their children and sign and return them to me.

Parents who do not agree with my rules can set up a conference with me. I let parents know that this does not mean I will change anything, but I am willing to work with them and listen to their ideas.

I also involve parents in the disciplining of their children. My parents know that if I call or send them an E-mail, the matter at hand needs immediate attention. Their child cannot participate in any class activities until we have met and solved the problem. When I do this, I send my administrator a copy of my discipline plan, along with copies of papers with parents' signatures on them.

Debora Garrick
Elementary school teacher
Westlake, Louisiana

■ Your discipline plan should be well planned, thorough, and consistent—and not dependent on an administrator. It also helps to have good lines of communication with parents.

Your classroom operates much more smoothly when your students know the buck stops with you.

Tracie Callos
Middle school teacher
Tok, Alaska

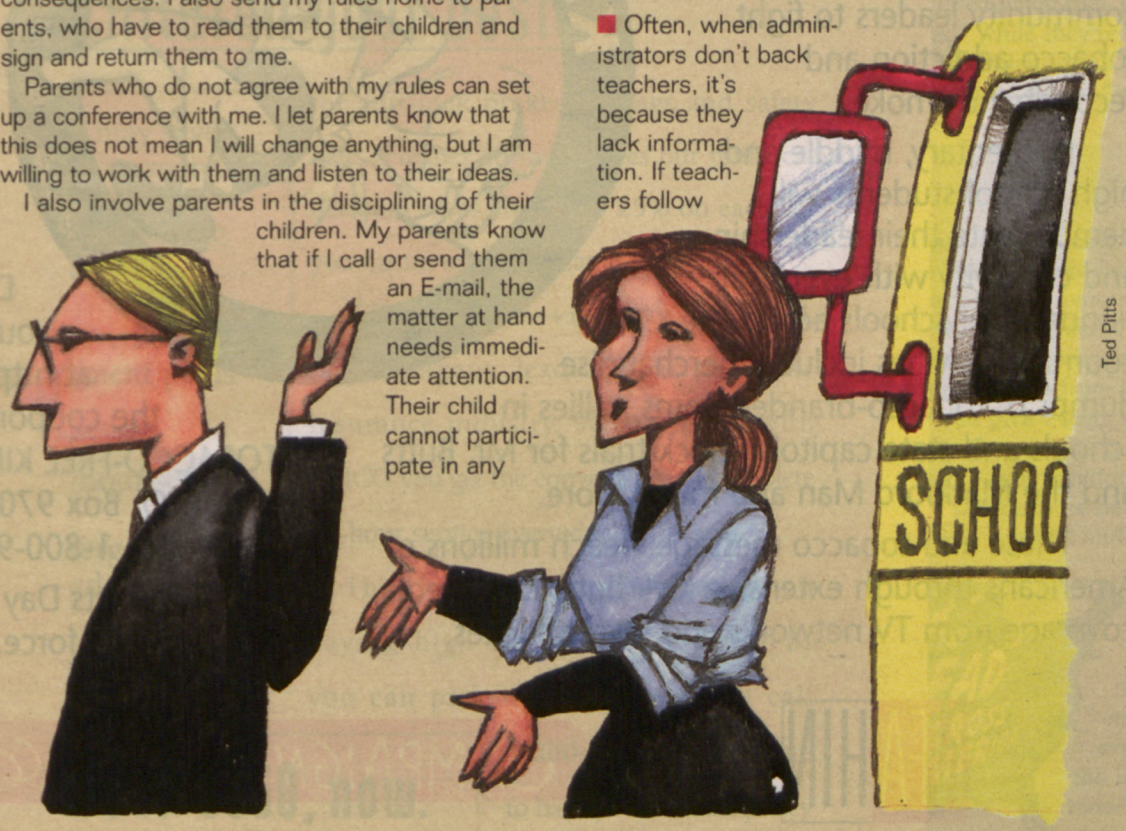
■ If an administrator doesn't back me up, I tighten up the way class is run. Giving students more restrictions and fewer comfort zones is certainly less enjoyable, but it is necessary, especially if I know my principal isn't going to back me up in potentially difficult situations.

Michael Yeakey
Middle school teacher
Cheraw, Colorado

■ Organize! Organize teachers in your building, teachers in your district, and parents who want safe schools. And demand statements in your contract that make faculty responsible for changes to discipline codes and demand that administrators support those codes. But be sure to make codes that serve justice and good education, not revenge and anger.

Kent Spring
High school math teacher
Portland, Oregon

■ Often, when administrators don't back teachers, it's because they lack information. If teachers follow their discipline plans and engage in all the steps leading up to a student being sent to the front office, most administrators will ultimately back them up.



Ted Pitts

Be specific in your referrals and let administrators know exactly what procedures you have attempted before sending a student to them.

Margaret Mitchell
Elementary school teacher
St. Petersburg, Florida

Got an Answer?

How do you raise morale among teachers or support staff?

E-mail your answer to dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Or send your answer by regular mail or fax 202/822-7206.

Please include your name, city, state, job title, and grade level, if applicable.

Published respondents will receive a bright *NEA Today* mug.

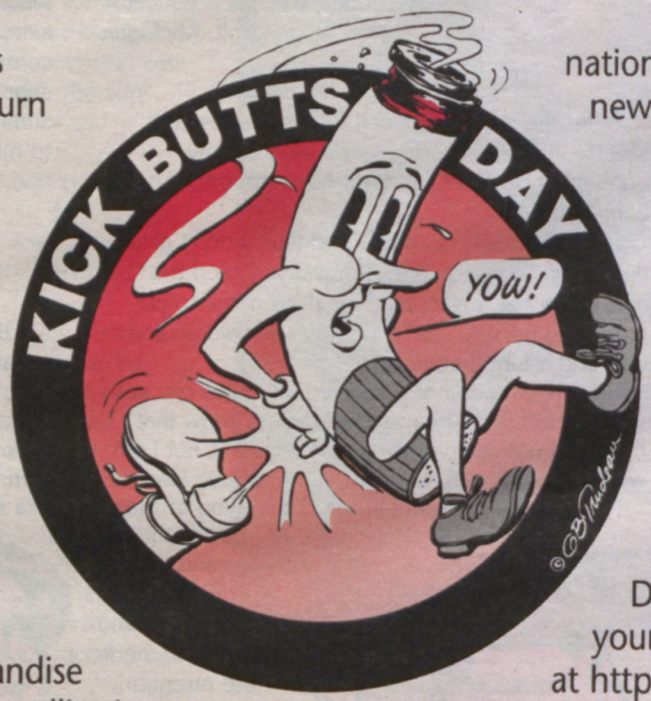
Kick Butts Day 2000:

Start something. Spark change. Be a force.

April 5, 2000

Here's an opportunity for you and your students to join with the NEA Health Information Network and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids to demand a healthy future for America's children.

For decades Big Tobacco has targeted kids. Now it's time to turn the tide. On April 5, 2000 Kick Butts Day — teachers all across the country will unite with thousands of kids, parents and community leaders to fight tobacco addiction and secondhand smoke.



Elementary, middle and high school students will demonstrate their leadership and creativity with events at hundreds of schools across the country. Activities include merchandise dumps of tobacco-branded items, rallies in schools and state capitols, mock trials for Mr. Butts and the Marlboro Man and much more.

These anti-tobacco messages reach millions of Americans through extensive Kick Butts Day media coverage from TV networks and local affiliates, national and local radio, magazines and newspapers.

Every day, more than 3,000 kids become regular smokers; tobacco will eventually kill one-third of them. Tobacco companies target the young to addict lifetime customers. We can break this deadly cycle.

A free activity guide will give you everything you need to plan a successful Kick Butts Day with your students. To order your free guide, visit our web site at http://www.kickbuttsday.org, send the coupon below to CAMPAIGN FOR TOBACCO-FREE KIDS, Attn: KBD Activity Guide/NEA HIN, P. O. Box 97044, Washington, DC 20090-7044, or fax it to 1-800-925-9813.

Kick Butts Day 2000: Start something. Spark change. Be a force.

NEA HIN & CAMPAIGN for TOBACCO-FREE Kids

NEA HIN & Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Kick Butts Day 2000
Activity Guide Request Form

Name: _____

Ms./Mr./Mrs. First MI Last

Organization/School: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-Mail: _____ Number of Guides Requested (limit of 3, please): _____

Mail your completed form to:
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
P.O. Box 97044
Washington, D.C. 20090-7044
Or Access and send this form through our web site www.kickbuttsday.org

Want to fight tobacco year-round? Join the CAMPAIGN. There is no cost to join this initiative which gives you the tools and information you need to help the tobacco industry from targeting our kids. Simply check the box below to receive your free membership kit.
☐

Know a young anti-tobacco advocate? Nominate him or her for the 2000 Youth Advocates of the Year Awards. Simply check the box below to receive nomination materials.
☐

For more information on the CAMPAIGN FOR TOBACCO-FREE KIDS, visit out Web site at www.tobaccofreekids.org

Learning

Training and Coordination Produce 'Early Success'

A two-year-old project in Wisconsin ties special reading instruction with regular classroom curriculum.

Photos by Mark Hoffman

Wisconsin teacher Heidi Hubing (above) reviews a lesson with Sean Flatman. At left, teacher Linda Milam works with James Homburg on a word recognition exercise.

Third grade test scores in reading were below state standards for two years straight at Fox Prairie Elementary School in Stoughton, Wisconsin. Then, two years ago, the school implemented the Early Success Program for all first and second graders having trouble reading.

Test scores improved almost immediately.

Staff members credit the training they've received with the program as a key to their newfound success. All kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers, as well as some paraprofessionals, receive four full days of training. They come away with a common vocabulary and coordinated strategies to implement.

Four to five children per class are typically identified for participation in the program. Students spend 30 minutes a day in a small-group session with the reading specialist and also participate in reading instruction in the regular classroom.

Linda Milam, the reading specialist at Fox Prairie, uses one book per week during her sessions with students. The same book is also read one-on-one with the child's regular teacher.

Some educators at Fox Prairie like the Early Success Program because it ties remedial reading "directly to the classroom," as principal Mike Jamison puts it.

Another big plus for the program: consistency. Every Monday, points out reading specialist Linda Milam, children review the previous week's book and receive a new book. Every Friday, they take home a summary of the current week's book, which the child reads and the parent signs.

The Early Success Program requires regular communication between educators and parents.

"Our reading specialist to teacher to parent link is much stronger now," says second grade teacher Heidi Hubing. "You just don't see the same growth when the parent element isn't there."

Hubing finds the formatted books that come with the Early Success Program engaging and interesting. Milam likes the "practical and workable" daily lesson plans provided by the publisher. The program also features tools, games, and other materials.

Using cardboard letters, for example, students try to create different words using a set of letters—such as "eat," "ate," and "tea." In another exercise, Milam puts three words from each new book on a "word wall." Students then write group sentences using words from the wall.

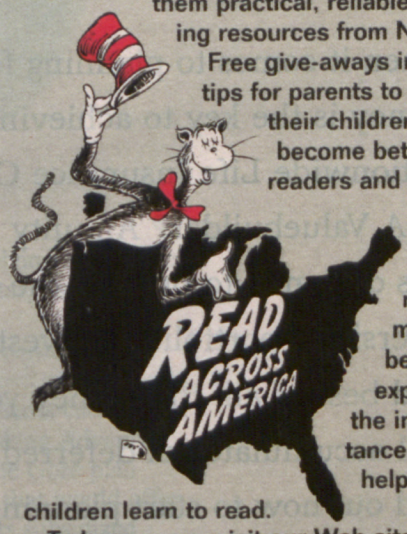
Early Success students who get stumped by a word can find, posted on each classroom wall, a big hand listing a reading strategy on each finger:

- Say the beginning sound of the word. Read to the end of the sentence.
- Look at the pictures.
- Use the sounds.
- Look at the word parts.
- Ask for help.

"Kids get very excited when they find a word they can read" while they're in the regular classroom, Milam says. "They are beaming and taking off." ✔

Free Tips for Parents

Plan on inviting parents and community members to your Read Across America celebration? If so, give them more than a slice of Seussian birthday cake. Offer them practical, reliable reading resources from NEA. Free give-aways include tips for parents to help their children become better readers and a handout for community members explaining the importance of helping children learn to read.



To learn more, visit our Web site at www.nea.org/readacross.

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- **The CIERA—Center for Improvement of Early Achievement in Reading—Web site now includes charts synthesizing findings across five studies of effective reading programs. The synthesis covers studies done by separate research centers and programs. For more information, visit www.ciera.org.**

- ***What Do the Experts Say? Helping Children Learn to Read*** **(Heinemann) offers reading advice from both teachers and researchers. The new book provides ideas and rationales for reading programs and instructions. It also features a companion set of six videos. For more information, visit www.heinemann.com.**

- **The Family Education Network's Web site for parents and teachers includes activities and advice for helping students at all levels become better readers. The site also features reviews of children's book by parents. Visit http://familyeducation.com.**

See how annuities compare at www.neamb.com/tda.html

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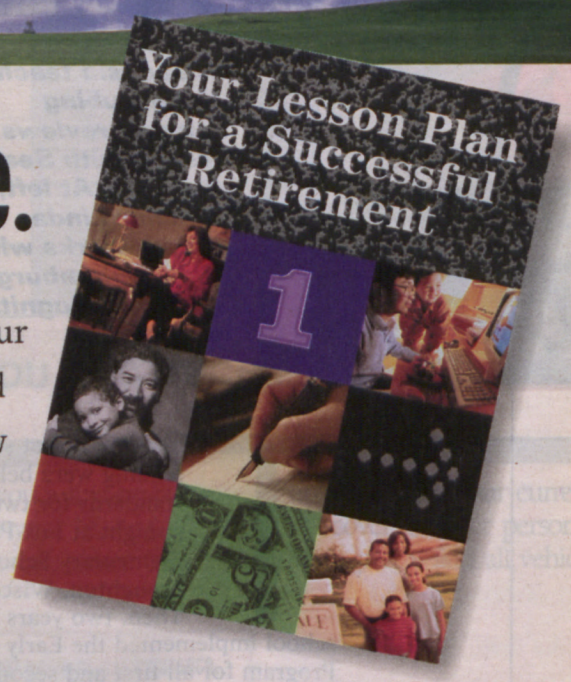

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VBNT0200

Finally, A Vision for a New Federal Role

Vice President Gore is proposing the biggest boost in federal support for public schools in over 30 years.

Back in 1964, after decades of NEA advocacy, a President of the United States was finally able to convince Congress to help support American public education on a serious, ongoing basis. Without President Lyndon Johnson's leadership, the landmark Elementary and Secondary Education Act would never have become law.

Federal support for public education has waxed and waned in the years since, sinking in the 1980s and then coming back in the 1990s, but, today, federal dollars still amount to just under 7 percent of the cost of operating America's public schools.

That could change. In December, Vice President Al Gore became the first American political leader in 35 years to propose a fundamental expansion of federal support for public education.

What would Gore's plan mean for you and your school? This month's NEA Today *takes a closer look.*

All candidates say they support education. What's Gore proposing, in actual dollars and cents?
Vice President Gore is proposing to devote $115 billion of the budget surplus to create an Education Reform Trust Fund. Those dollars would be earmarked for a wide range of initiatives, from raising teacher salaries and reducing class size to making preschool more universally accessible.

Just what sort of an increase in federal support for education would the Gore plan constitute?
A sizeable increase. Over the last 10 years, the federal government spent, all told, $182 billion to support public schools. Over the next 10 years, under the Gore plan, federal support would jump by $115 billion.

This boost would clearly amount to the largest single federal funding increase for educating kids since the 1964 passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

No President has ever before pushed for a program to directly raise teacher salaries. How would the Gore plan work?
Far too many high-poverty school districts are hard-pressed to attract and retain qualified teachers. In California alone, 28,500 emergency credentials were handed out in the last school year.

To address this reality, the Gore plan would award grants to districts that create partnerships to raise teacher standards and provide professional support to help all teachers succeed.

All teachers in these participating partnership districts would receive up to a $5,000 salary increase.

Teachers who have met an advanced professional standard—such as national certification—would receive an additional $5,000 salary hike.

Will higher salaries alone be enough to get the nation past the impending teacher shortage?
Probably not, which is why Gore is also proposing an aggressive effort to attract talented young people into teaching via what he calls a 21st Century National Teachers Corps.

This Teachers Corps would annually provide college scholarships to 60,000 young people who commit to teach in high-need schools for at least four years.

Isn't the Clinton Administration already moving to lower class size? What's different about what Gore is proposing?
The Clinton Administration's class size initiative has centered around the hiring of 100,000 new teachers. The new teachers hired so far have been largely at the elementary level.

The Gore plan aims to build on this success by creating incentives to create smaller high schools. Districts that have a strategy to create high schools with less than 600 students—or break up existing schools in innovative ways—would be eligible for the new federal support.

Gore's goal: an average classroom size nationally of no more than 20 students for all grades, with an average no higher than 18 in the early grades.

Too many kids arrive at school not ready to learn. What's the Gore plan say about readiness?
A huge chunk of the total plan's spending—about $50 billion—would be spent to make preschool education accessible for three- and four-year-olds.

Currently, about 55 percent of American three- and four- year-olds are enrolled in preschool. But these totals are skewed by income. Nearly 80 percent of households earning over $75,000 send their children to pre-school. The figure in households earning under $10,000 a year: only 43 percent.

Studies have shown that children who attend pre-K programs have better social and problem-solving skills once they enter the elementary level.

What about opportunity for older, disadvantaged students?
Many low-income students can't afford to even think about taking Advanced Placement courses. The Gore plan would provide grants that would offer disadvantaged students subsidized access to courses at the AP level.

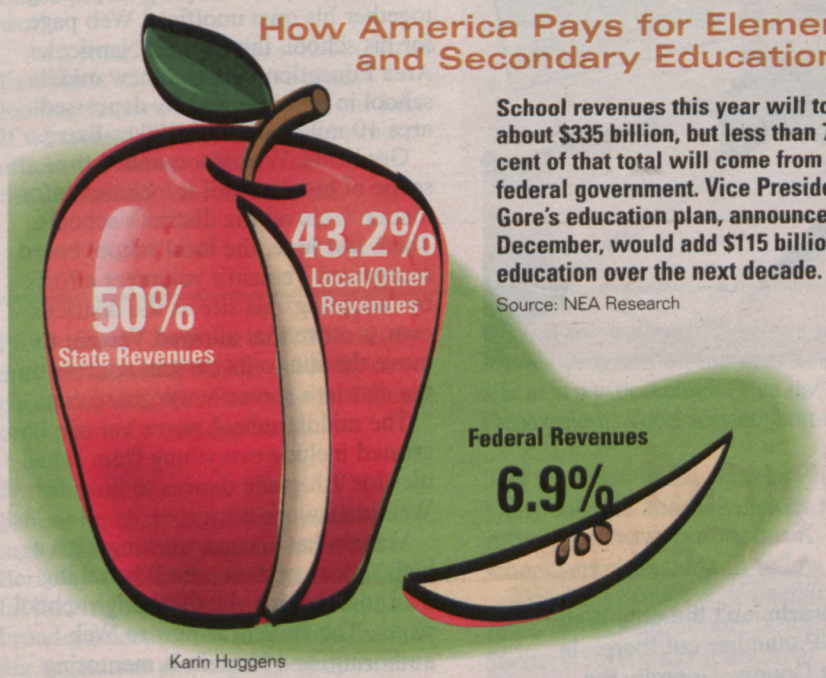
What's NEA's take on the Gore plan?
NEA President Bob Chase has called the plan "the kind of educational leadership America wants from its next president."

What about other reaction?
Predictably mixed. Texas Governor George W. Bush, for instance, has blasted Gore for proposing an expanded federal role in education.

"I'd be wary about federal politicians running around the country handing out pay raises," Bush noted in December. "That's a local matter." ✔

For more details on the Gore plan, check the Web at www.gore2000.com.

How America Pays for Elementary and Secondary Education



Karin Huggens

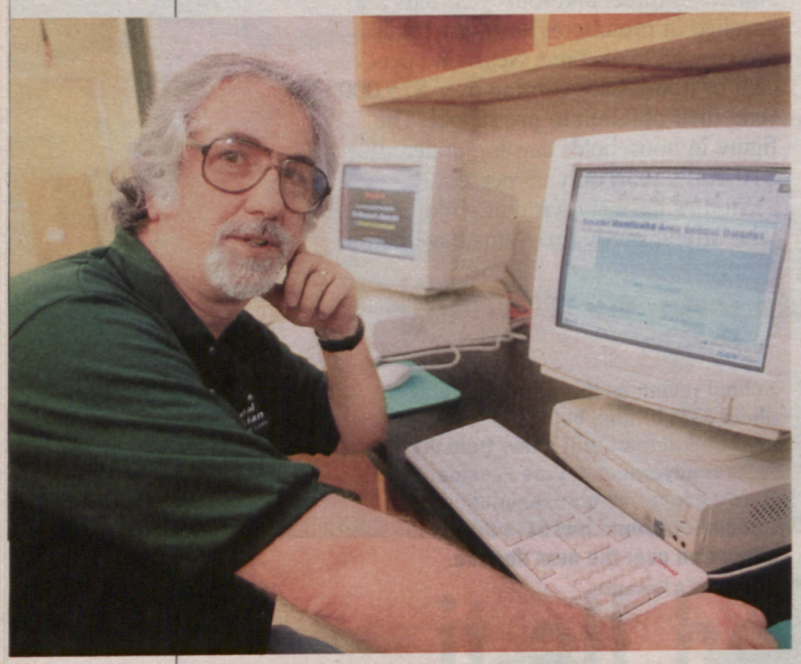
School revenues this year will total about $335 billion, but less than 7 percent of that total will come from the federal government. Vice President Al Gore's education plan, announced in December, would add $115 billion to education over the next decade.

Source: NEA Research

TEAMWORK

This 'Custodial Technician' Really Gets Technical

When school officials in one Pennsylvania district looked into creating a Web site, they didn't have to go far. School custodian Jim Verazin had already designed one for his school.



Jim Verazin's the first to admit he's "a computer nut." And that's why this Pennsylvania school custodian ended up creating his school district's Web site. In the spring of 1997, Verazin, who had worked with computers for 20 years, began spending time on a personal project: putting together his own unofficial Web page for his school, the Greater Nanticoke Area Education Center, a new middle school in an economically depressed area 10 miles south of Wilkes-Barre.

Gradually, Verazin expanded the scope of his site until it included information from all the district's schools. Then, last June, the local school board recognized Verazin's volunteer efforts by "adopting" his site as the district's own, a move that allowed Verazin to move the site to its current address on the district's server: www.gnasd.com.

The middle school pages Verazin has created include everything from schedules for 7th grade dances to links for Web homework resources.

Verazin has started working with a high school student who'll be taking over maintaining the GNA high school pages. The student is new to Web authoring, and Verazin is mentoring him as he learns.

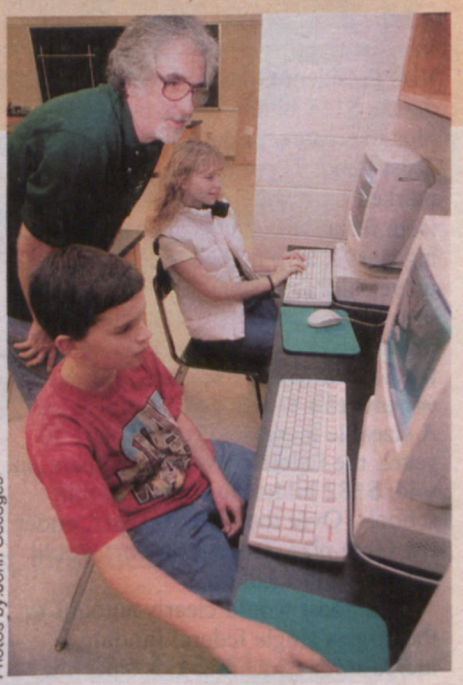
The district's teachers, many of them new to using the Internet, are also benefiting from Verazin's help. In the site's "Classrooms" section, for instance, there's space for a Web page for each teacher's classroom. Verazin does more than just post information teachers supply him. He finds additional Web resources for teachers and shows them how to use these.

"I'm trying to create a competition among the teachers to see who has the best Web page," he says.

Verazin is currently president of the 70-member Greater Nanticoke Area Educational Support Personnel Association. The job title listed for him on the site is "custodial technician." He doesn't like the title "custodian" and likes "janitor" even less. And it's not just because he's a computer expert for his school district.

"When someone says 'janitor' you think of a guy with a cigar pushing a broom," he laughs. "But there's so much technology involved in school buildings now that we all have to be technicians." ✔

Though his title might read custodian, Pennsylvania NEA member Jim Verazin also doubles as his school district's Web site designer.



Photos by John Secoges

Behind the Scenes

Jim Verazin isn't the only Web-savvy ESP member out there. In Gwinnett County, Georgia, the Gwinnett Bus Drivers Association is venturing into cyberspace with the support of a 1999 ESP Technology Grant from NEA. GDBA represents 1,000 ESP. Check out the site at http://personal.atl.bellsouth.net/atl/d/m/dm9165/.

Going the Extra Mile

Michael Gaul, food service director for the Colorado River (Arizona) Union High School District, received the Arizona Education Association's 1999 ESPecially for Kids Award for a simple recipe with lots of ingredients.

In a culinary arts class of his creation, Gaul teaches 20 special ed students how to work cafeteria machinery and cook dishes like chicken florentine, steamed spinach, and apple upside-down cake.

The food is so good that his students cater community events and even operate Le Bistro, their own restaurant at Mohave High School. It's open to the public at various times throughout the year.

The ingredients: To get the restaurant off the ground, special ed students did the cooking, a shop class built the woodwork, a creative writing class wrote the menu, while French students translated it. A business class tackled Le Bistro's books.

"My philosophy," says Gaul, "is that because there is so much in the kitchen that needs to be done—chopping, baking, even paperwork—there is a job for everyone."

The Texas State Teachers Association doesn't mess around when it hands out its Ronnie Ray ESP of the Year Award. The 1999 winner, **Wretha Thomas**, is being recognized for leading her fellow Houston support staffers from near-degradation to dignity.

Thomas started organizing transportation, maintenance, and food service workers in 1987 because they lacked benefits and job security. Within six months, membership of Houston Educational Support Personnel grew from 50 to 850.

Bruce Graner/Silver Image

Florida's Elena Loftus believes her print shop can do a better job than an outside firm, so she's fighting the district's contracting out scheme.

TEAM PLAYER

Printing to Perfection

Name: Elena Loftus

Job Title: printer for Escambia County School District in Pensacola, Florida; local, Escambia Education Support Personnel Association (EESPA)

Experience: 17 years

What I do: Sixty-six schools and special centers order from the print shop, so our job is never done. We print color and black-and-white, covering every format from newsletters and newspapers to magazines and school programs. In addition, we print a lot of forms that the state requires of schools.

How I help students achieve: One very direct way is through a program called DCT that offers part-time positions to high school students as well as college students. In the program, students bind, collate, and stitch different types of formats. Students are then able to learn work ethics and get job experience. I always hope we teach them something valuable.

How I team up with my colleagues: The print shop has just seven workers, so it's very important that every print job is a collaborative enterprise.

We recently faced a difficult challenge when a management study concluded that the print shop should be done away with. We decided to check into the study and found problems with it, including some information that was just plain false.

Because of our actions and the support of the community, a committee is now in place to study the benefits of in-house printing versus outsourcing the work.

As a team, we save the school district thousands of dollars. We're always looking for new ways of doing our jobs. If we weren't able to do our jobs more efficiently, we wouldn't be able to do the amount of work that we do.

RESOURCES

Technology for Diverse Learners
A technology pilot program in Minnesota turns around the academic careers of a group of at-risk students. A New Jersey teacher uses technology to help teach English to a class of students who speak 22 different languages.

These and other success stories are reported in *Technology for Diverse Learners*, a new book from the NEA Professional Library.

"When it comes to teaching ESL and at-risk students," the book points out, "computers and video technology succeed where traditional methods fall short."

The 96-page book offers six stories about NEA members who are using technology to connect with students who are difficult to reach. It should prove valuable to all support staff who work with at-risk students.

Copies are $9.95 (the special discounted NEA member price), plus $2.50 s&h. To order, call the NEA Professional Library at 800/229-4200 and ask for stock #2908-9-00-PL, or check out the NEA Professional Library online at www.nea.org/books.

No More 'Mystery Meat'
School lunches are looking (and tasting) different this year at California's Berkeley Unified School District. High fat and high calorie foods are out, and a broader selection of fresh foods, including vegetarian and organic options, are in. Berkeley's new school food policy also calls for the elimination of irradiated and genetically altered foods from school menus.

Some of the organic food comes from California farmers' markets, while some is being raised in the schools' own gardens. The nonprofit Berkeley Food Systems Project is helping the school district raise money to purchase organic food, create the school gardens, and train teachers to incorporate garden lessons into their classrooms.

Read more about Berkeley's new food service program on the district's Web site at www.berkeley.k12.ca.us/Departments/food service_home.htm.

The School Privatization Scene
Many colleges and universities may be embracing privatization, but K-12 schools aren't rushing to follow suit.

American School & University magazine's 6th Privatization/Contract Services Survey has found that 21.7 percent of school districts do not outsource any services, compared to 12.3 percent in 1997, while only 5.3 percent of colleges do not outsource.

At the same time, some school districts are increasing the extent of their privatization.

A summary of the report, with supporting tables, is on the Web at www.asumag.com/privatiz99.htm. The K-12 part of the report is $45. Order online or call 913/341-1300; fax 913/967-1898.

"There was such a great need for the ESP to know someone was speaking for them," recalls this activist, now full-time-release president of HESP.

Among the dividends to date of Houston ESP organizing: five sick days per year, an annual ESP Day commemoration, five seats on the district's consultation panel for unions, and an open-door policy with the superintendent and school board.

Learn 1,000 student names. Work with 78 teachers and four administrators. Answer the phone non-stop from 6:45 a.m. until 3:15 p.m.

Work like this would put years on most of us. But it hasn't dented Cheryl Smith, a secretary at Butler High School in Vandalia, Ohio.

"I love kids. I love the people I work with," she says, "and the work makes me stay very young."

Smith, the Ohio Education Association's 1999 School Support Person of the Year, helps students understand both secretarial and real estate work because she's also a part-time real estate agent. She often talks to the school's Everyday Living class.

And Smith always has time to help her colleagues. She holds several Association positions, including local secretary and member of the local labor-management committee.

Smith is especially proud of helping bring ESP into OEA 10 years ago.

"It's the best thing we ever did!" she says.

Know an ESP member who deserves recognition in* NEA Today*? Send all the details, including the person's job title and school district, to ESPInput@list.nea.org.

Learning

TIPS FOR THE WIRED CLASSROOM

A Mind-Boggling Resource

Each week a couple of Web sites from the warehouse site www.4Kids.org are featured in my Sunday funnies supplement. 4Kids has six major categories to choose from, each with several links to subjects of interest to kids and adults.

My favorite link that 4Kids has highlighted recently is a rich Web site on optical illusions, www.illusionworks.com/html/jump_page.html. The site includes lots of links to interactive experiments with illusions, as well as information about artists such as M.C. Escher.

Carolyn Stanley
Technology teacher
Bethany, Connecticut
Telariond@aol.com

OMNIVISION
AN AWARD WINNER
EduNET Choice
editor's choice
BONUS.com
THE SUPERSITE FOR KIDS
parent soup souper site
HOURS AND HOURS OF MIND BENDING ILLUSIONS
Welcome to the most comprehensive collection of optical and sensory illusions on the world-wide web. This award-winning collection consists of innumerable interactive demonstrations, up-to-date and reliable scientific explanations, school projects, illusion artwork, interactive puzzles, 3D graphics, suggested reading lists, bibliographies, perception links, and much more. There is literally hours and hours of fun and cool material here! Most of the effects, demonstrations, and artwork appear here for the first time. We hope that you will agree that this site is what the web was best suited for!
To benefit the many diverse visitors (over 4000+ separate users a day on average!) we have decided to make two sites (containing more or less the same material), although the level of explanations will be different.
Introductory Level. This lev
explanations that are easily und
recommended school science p
Advanced Level. This level c
scientific explanations is much
American). The explanations ar
serious student or researcher.
Illusion Art Museum
COLLECTION OF ARTISTIC ILLUSIONS
FALSE

It's not an illusion—you'll find interactive demos, scientific explanations, and school projects at www.illusionworks.com/html/jump_page.html.

My favorite Web site

"MySchoolWork (www.myschoolwork.com) has helped me communicate more with parents. Parents can access their child's grades, homework, and school news from anywhere in the world."

Anna Lilly
High school algebra teacher
Lavergne, Tennessee

Wish There Were Two of You?

I teach six classes for all fifth, sixth, and eighth grade students in a 30-station computer lab. I use my computer, a microphone, VCR, and televisions to present all my lessons. I videotape each lesson each day and play the lesson back to each class.

This lets me move around the room, working as my own aide to help students with the assignment.

I'm able to keep all my classes together as to what they're learning, and students who are absent can keep up with their assignments by watching the taped class.

Randall Surline
Computer lab instructor
West Branch, Michigan
surliner@i-star.com

See One, Do One, Teach One

My students work in small groups at the beginning of the year to design a class Web site on paper. Each group shares its design with the class, and we vote on the best one.

I instruct students in the winning group in FrontPage Web authoring software. After they complete and upload their page, they teach the next group, and so on.

This saves me time, and students enjoy communicating our classroom accomplishments via the Web.

Theresa Bowen
Sixth grade teacher
Defiance, Ohio
theesajb@defnet.com

E-mail Partnering

Gaggle.net (www.gaggle.net) is a super E-mail service for students. It's safe and free. Every E-mail that my students send through this service is "carbon copied" to me immediately. I can proof students' messages and monitor their communications.

I use Gaggle.net E-mail to pair a remedial student with a student who needs a challenge. Students are not allowed to divulge who they are—or even to hint at which student with whom they are paired. The pairs complete projects together via E-mail.

Our first project is to write a story together. One student E-mails the first five sentences of a story to his or her partner, who then adds five sentences to it and E-mails it back. This continues until the story is completed.

All finished stories are published on the Web and printed in booklet form.

This project has really motivated my students. It's great for self-esteem. Not being able to "see" the friends who have helped them certainly has created bonds for students who are not readily accepted into certain circles.

Betsy Norris
Middle school English teacher
Shelbyville, Tennessee
Norrisb@k12tn.net

Tech Tools

■ A wide variety of professional development opportunities are listed on LycosZone at www.lycoszone.com/dir/Educators_Resources/Professional_Development. Continuing education courses, seminars, and mentor programs are among the offerings.

■ Looking for a free site to host your class Web page? At the Free Web Page Provider Review (http://fwpreview.ngworld.net/fwp/) you'll find a guide to free Web page providers around the world.

■ Need help with that grant proposal? A guidebook for educators from Lucent Technologies, at www.wavelan.com/education/pdfs/grantwriting.pdf, has tips on project planning, grantmaker research, and proposal development.

■ *Teachers on the Internet* by NEA member Kim Mitchell is designed for the educator who is new to using the World Wide Web in the classroom. The book features chapters on acceptable use policies, using search engines, and finding lesson plans—or designing your own. $9.95 from Instructional Fair, 800/443-2976.

TALK TO US:

Have a nifty classroom tip or lesson plan that uses technology? E-mail a description (under 200 words, please!) to wiredclassroom@list.nea.org.

Is there a Web site, CD-ROM, or piece of software you can't live without? E-mail your favorites—and why you love them—to myfavoritetech@list.nea.org.

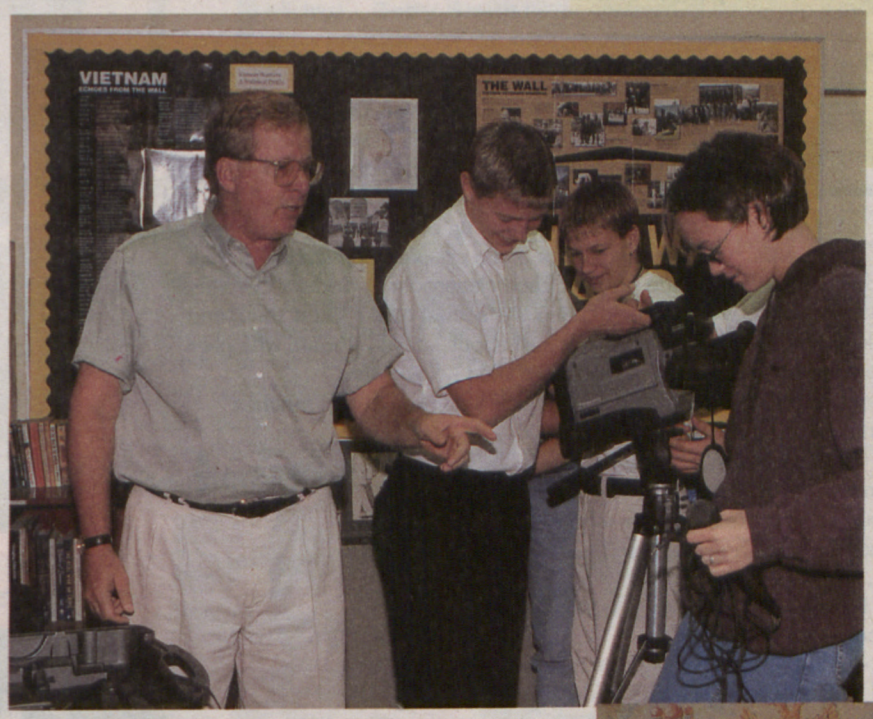
Or send your responses by regular mail to *NEA Today*, or by Fax to 202/822-7206, or through the Web at www.nea.org/cet.

Those published here will receive a sparkling *NEA Today* mug!

Documenting Diversity

Through documentary film-making, rural Kansas students learn lessons in multiculturalism and tolerance.

We're not in Kansas anymore. Norm Conard helps kids explore new worlds through video production.



Photos by Gary Palmer

Who:
Norman Conard, social studies and video production teacher, Uniontown High School, Uniontown, Kansas

E-mail:
Nconard@prodigy.net

Inspiration:
When you teach in an all-white, rural community, it's a challenge to make lessons in multiculturalism and diversity more than intellectual exercises. Norm Conard meets the challenge by using technology—in the form of documentary film-making—to help students open windows onto the world.

"We should teach tolerance in our school system. Students need to be exposed to diversity whether or not it exists in their community," explains Conard. "And teachers are the facilitators of this process."

Conard's students design multicultural research projects that are a perfect marriage of technology and social studies curriculum. To produce documentaries and performances for Conard's classes, students must master film-making and research techniques.

"Hardware and software are cold," Conard says. "We have to tie them in with issues of sensitivity."

For a moment, forget the more than 100 state and national awards his students have won for their projects. The real impact lies in the stories they tell:

■ Elizabeth Eckford, one of the Little Rock Nine. Conard's students were the catalysts for a reunion between Eckford and a white schoolmate who had befriended her 40 years earlier.

■ Irena Sendler, a Polish woman who helped prevent 2,500 children in the Warsaw Ghetto from going to Nazi death camps.

■ Bill Moore, a white civil rights activist who lost his life in 1963 during a protest walk across Alabama. Conard's students contacted Moore's widow, who pieced together information that the students developed into a performance.

"My students gain a lot from researching, writing, and producing multicultural projects," says Conard. "But the greatest value is their increased awareness of other cultures, ethnicities, and world events—and their place in the middle of them."

Lesson:
Students begin their projects with research—searching the Internet, reading newspaper and magazine articles, and gathering information from organizations such as the Southern Poverty Law Center. Then, like any good reporter, they catch a lead. Two lines here, a mention of a name, and their creativity begins to flow.

Thanks to grants, the classroom contains PCs and Macs, a standard Panasonic video camera, and a digital editing system. Videoconferencing technology lets students interview experts in other states and countries, without the time and expense of travel.

"The difference in our classroom is not the technology—it's how we use it," Conard explains. "But while it's key to our work, technology only speeds up the research process."

That may be so, but the creative process can't be rushed.

"Making a film or writing a performance takes an enormous amount of time," says Conard—about 200 hours for a 10-minute documentary. "Students spend a majority of their time outside the classroom completing their projects."

Click:
Still, the time spent is worth the perspective students gain on life outside Uniontown. Conard encourages educators to develop their own open-ended multicultural research projects.

"These projects cross disciplines, meet national standards, and develop critical thought," he says. "But they also change lives and bring a new view of tolerance."

"Our class motto, to paraphrase the Talmud, is 'He who changes one person, changes the world entire,'" Conard adds. "I don't do it, my students do."

—Erik Komendant

Bytes for Beginners

My students are trying to convince me that it's safe to make online purchases. Is this true?

You should buy what your students are selling you! Shopping the Net is as safe as—and in some cases safer than—buying something via the phone.

In both cases, you're "transmitting" personal information (name, phone, and credit card numbers) to someone you don't know.

On the phone, we use intuition to help us decide whether or not to divulge personal information. On the Net, only a secure connection guarantees that no one is "listening in" on your purchase—intercepting your data as they move from your computer to the online store's.

How do you know if and when your connection is secure? Many Web sites use Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) technology to encrypt the information that you send over the Internet. If the Web address on the page that asks for your credit card information begins with "https" instead of "http," then SSL is in place.

Other ways you can tell if a Web site uses security software? Your browser will display one of these icons:

■ a locked padlock at the bottom of the screen (Netscape Navigator 4.0 and higher)

■ an unbroken key at the bottom of the screen (earlier versions of Netscape Navigator)

■ a lock on the status bar (Microsoft Internet Explorer).

Have comments or questions about technology? Go to www.nea.org/cet, or E-mail your questions to webeditor@dear.nea.org.

My favorite Software

"Internet Typing Challenge (South Western, 800/354-9706) is a fun way to improve keyboarding skills. After taking the tests and posting them on the Web, students can compare results with students around the nation."

JoAnn Santillo
High school business teacher
Canfield, Ohio

A Great Move

A custodian trades his chess skills for a chance to read. Everyone wins.

A year ago, North Carolina custodian **Otis Pittman** heard one of the best offers of his life: "If you teach our students to play chess," said his school principal Lane Anderson, pictured below, "We will teach you how to read."

Pittman took Anderson up on his offer, and what started with a few students and a couple of chessboards has exploded into a school-wide project. Each classroom at Sedalia Elementary now has a chessboard, and last spring the school held its first tournament.

"Taking time out for kids is what it's all about," says Pittman, who grew up in a sharecropper family. "I've always liked helping kids."

Every time he sits down with kids to play a game, Pittman teaches students critical and creative thinking skills. Chess, he says, requires students to think.

"Chess is not like checkers, where you can move a piece anywhere on the board," notes Pittman.

For his own part, Pittman is working hard to become an active reader.

"At age 62, Otis has taught us that we are all lifetime learners," says Anderson, "and that we are all teachers who can share our individual gifts with others."

Adds Anderson: "By his courage and willingness to learn, Otis has truly inspired all of us." ✔

Photos by Chris Seward

A Documentary Life

As a music teacher in rural Tutopolis, Illinois, **Craig Lindvahl** spends his spare time producing, writing, and composing documentaries.

His talents and special "hands-on" approach recently won him the Mid-America Emmy for his documentary titled "Weathered Secrets: Barns of the American Midwest." Telling the histories of German, Polish, and Finnish barns in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, Lindvahl goes beneath the wood barn surfaces painted red.

"I explore the life that exists around the barns," explains Lindvahl. "Looking behind the romanticized image of barns reveals the less than perfect, real-life struggles of American families."

Lindvahl has produced two other documentaries, "They Served With Honor" about World War II veterans and "Destination: Marshall Islands," a music video that linked his students and the Peace Corps.

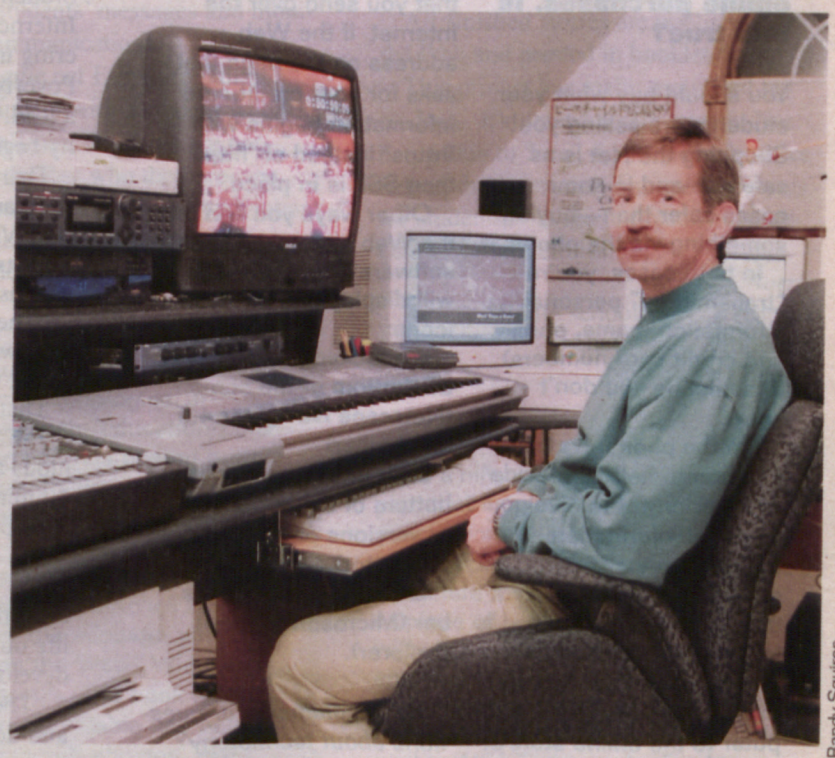
Lindvahl did not intend to make the classroom his career when he first started teaching 21 years ago, but he quickly found a love for the profession and his students.

"By working on documentaries, I spark family discussions across the country," says Lindvahl. "But, with teaching, I affect children's lives every day."

Lindvahl divides his time between teaching music to first through sixth graders, working with the local junior high and high school bands, and his extracurricular filmmaking.

"You don't have to be confined by what you do or what you teach," says Lindvahl. "Kids push you to do things. We can learn from them."

Lindvahl is currently working on another documentary, about his local high school basketball team and its relationship with small-town Tutopolis. ✔



Randy Squires

Chase photo

Riding the Airwaves

During her 23-year career as an elementary school teacher in Michigan, **Betty Smith** never dreamed of becoming a radio talk show host. But, for the last two years, Smith has entertained and informed listeners of WSDP Radio (88.5 FM) in Plymouth-Canton through her weekly show, "Lemonade with BJ."

"It all started when the radio station staff visited my local senior citizens center," explains Smith, who's now retired. "They announced they were interested in piloting a senior show and wanted volunteers. I said I was interested. Next thing I knew, I was writing the show and choosing music and guests."

Smith's guest list has ranged from retired football coach Bo Schembechler to local teachers.

"I try to use my show to raise important issues as well as entertain," says Smith. "I also show listeners that retirees are not couch potatoes, they're active in the community, in the schools, in the churches.

Smith's Wednesday morning show has become a staple to seniors and non-seniors alike.

"This has become a great new career, and I'm having a wonderful time," adds Smith. "It just shows you, never say never." ✔

Music Makes the Man

Unhappy in his previous career, San Diego teacher **Keith Ballard** has found his calling: teaching mariachi music and heading up a steel drum band at a middle and high school just three-and-a-half miles from the Mexican border.

Now 36, Keith Ballard spent much of his 20s selling pharmaceuticals to Phoenix doctors.

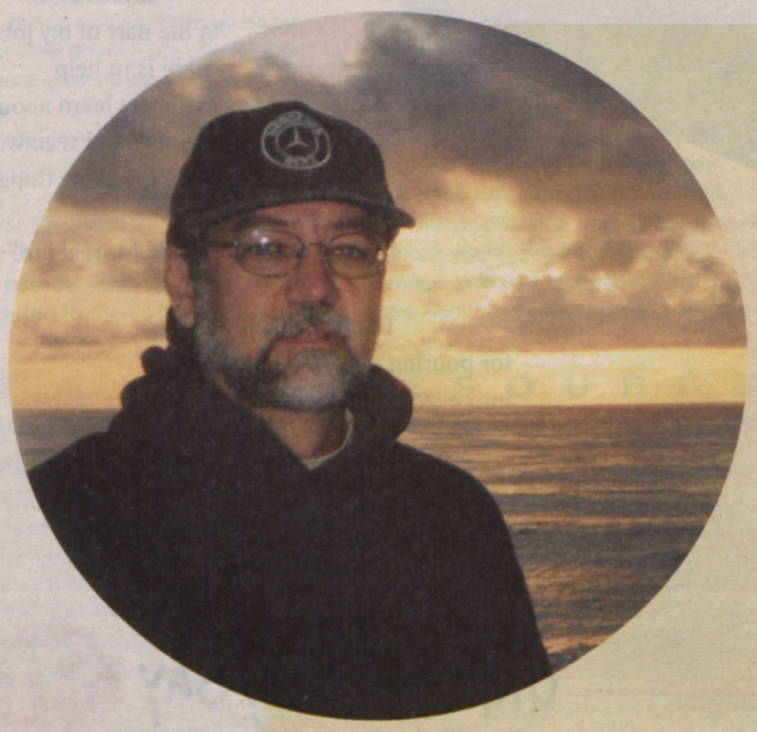
"The job was monotonous, boring, easy, and decent-paying," he recalls. "I wanted something more out of life."

So Ballard—who had experience playing percussion instruments professionally—went back to school for degrees in music and secondary education. Now Ballard teaches all five instruments used in mariachi bands—violins, trumpets, guitars, guitarrones, and vihuellas—to seventh and eighth graders.

Last year Ballard started an Island Steel Drum Band at Montgomery High School. The band—one of the largest such groups in the country—has been a great hit, appearing on the nationally televised "Donny and Marie Show" last August and cutting a CD at Montgomery Middle School, which has a predominantly Mexican-American student body.

"I believe that many of these kids feel better about themselves, thanks to mariachi," says Ballard. "They're not alone. I always wanted to do something that could make a difference in people's lives. I feel like I have one of the greatest jobs in the world." ✔

Fred Solowey



Life on the Bottom

Ever heard of the Strait of Juan de Fuca? High school science teacher **Ken Harasty** has. Harasty, who teaches in Brownsville, Pennsylvania, spent time last summer off the coast of Canada and Washington State and experienced the local straits from an unusual angle—up from the ocean floor.

Harasty and seven other science teachers accompanied university professors to the Juan de Fuca area last summer. On a series of deep-sea dives, researchers gathered tube worms to study how they can live at 2,276 feet below sea level.

Harasty was the only teacher in the research group to dive to the ocean bottom in the expedition's deep sea vehicle.

"Life at the bottom of the ocean is a whole different world," says Harasty. "Having that perspective gave me personal experience to draw on to teach my students."

Adds Harasty: "These opportunities for real research exist for all teachers. It takes some work, but participating in current research programs allows teachers to get real life experience on what they teach."

To find out more about this teaching project, log on to www.ocean.washington.edu/outreach/revel. ✔

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Where did he learn to pour himself into everything he does?

During the week,
he teaches 4th through 6th grades.
On weekends,
he manages a McDonald's.®
Why?

Shahid Muhammad

"I do it
for the kids,"
says Shahid.
"A big part of my job
here is to help
crew members learn about
responsibility and teamwork.
As a teacher, I do the same thing.
In both jobs,
I prepare young people for real life."

Thanks, Shahid,
for pouring everything you have
into everything you do.

Where can your students
learn values
that last
a lifetime?

1955 1960 1965 1970 1975 1980 1985 1990 1995 2000

did somebody say M?®

Teen Behavior Can Boost Cervical Cancer Risk

About 12,800 American women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer this year, and nearly 4,800 will die from it, according to the American Cancer Society. But research now shows that the disease's risk factors can be traced to a woman's behavior as a teenager. Vicki Harrison of NEA's Health Information Network details what school employees and students should know about the disease.

Karin Huggens

What is cancer of the cervix?

The cervix is the part of a woman's body that connects the vagina and uterus. During birth, the cervix dilates and allows a baby to pass from the womb to the birth canal.

Cancer of the cervix doesn't happen suddenly. Over time, normal cells change to become precancerous and ultimately cancerous, a process that can unfold within several months or many years. In some cases, precancerous cells go away without ever developing into cancer. But, more often, they need to be treated.

Cervical cancer used to be a common cause of cancer death among American women. But, between 1955 and 1992, cervical cancer deaths declined by a staggering 74 percent. This drastic change is attributed to the use of the Pap test, or Pap smear, for early detection. The American Cancer Society recommends that women begin yearly Pap tests at age 18 or when they become sexually active.

What causes cancer of the cervix?

Contracting the human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common risk factor. Sexually transmitted types of HPV—often called "genital warts"—cause raised, bumpy warts on the skin of the genital organs and anal area. An estimated 5.5 million Americans are infected with HPV each year—about 20 million already have it. HPV infection can cause changes in cervical cells that can be detected with a Pap test.

Other risk factors include smoking, HIV infection, limited access to health care, and diets low in fruits and vegetables.

Are birth control pills linked to cervical cancer?

Research suggests that there may be a slight risk increase for women who use oral contraceptives for five or more years. Because many teenage girls use oral contraceptives—both to prevent pregnancy and in some cases to reduce acne—more research on the link is needed. Meanwhile, the American Cancer Society believes that women and teenagers should discuss with their health care providers whether the benefits of using oral contraceptives outweigh the risks.

How can cancer of the cervix be prevented?

Most cervical cancers can be prevented by not smoking, delaying the onset of sexual intercourse, limiting the number of sexual partners, and avoiding intercourse with people who've had multiple partners.

Condoms are highly recommended for protection against sexually transmitted diseases, but research shows that condoms cannot protect against HPV infection.

This is because HPV can be contracted by skin-to-skin contact with any HPV-infected area of the body, such as the genital area not covered by a condom. The virus can also be passed without visible symptoms and can be present for years before symptoms appear.

Having regular Pap tests to detect HPV infection and precancerous cells also helps prevent cervical cancer—treatment of these conditions can stop its progress. Most invasive cervical cancers are found in women who haven't had regular Pap tests.

What can educators do to help?

"Educators should include discussions of cervical health as part of every health or reproduction lesson and inform their students that pregnancies and multiple sexual partners before the age of 20 increase the risk of cervical disease," says cancer survivor Carol Ann Armenti, a psychologist and director of the Center for Cervical Health in Toms River, New Jersey. "What young women do at early age can put them at great risk for cervical disease, and they need to be aware of that." ✔

HEALTH RESOURCES

- **The National Breast and Cervical Health Campaign of the NEA Health Information Network produces free materials that promote early detection of breast and cervical cancer. For more information on the campaign or to order materials, call 800/718-8387.**
- **The Center for Cervical Health offers free emotional support and information to women diagnosed with cervical disease. It also provides testing information and physician referrals. For more information, visit www.cervical-health.com or call 732/255-1132.**
- **The Web site of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists provides information on women's health. Sections include adolescent care, patient education, news, a physician directory, and a resource catalog. Visit the site at www.acog.org.**

NEA·HIN

From the **NEA Health Information Network**

Parenting Guide

***Your Adolescent*, the new parenting guide from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, helps parents, caregivers, and others who work with young people understand and respond to the challenges of the teen years. The 374-page book describes the developmental milestones of adolescence and covers practical issues and serious obstacles. To order a copy ($27.50), visit www.aacap.org or call Harper Collins at 800/242-7737.**

Teaching the Birds and Bees to Kids

Using lively, age-appropriate prose and comic-style artwork, *It's So Amazing! A Book about Eggs, Sperm, Birth, Babies, and Families*, by author Robie H. Harris and illustrator Michael Emberley, answers questions younger children have about reproduction and sexuality. After the success of their award-winning book, *It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex and Sexual Health*, the duo received requests from educators, librarians, and health professionals to do their new book. Topics in *Amazing* include love, sex, gender, families, sexuality, sexual abuse, and HIV/AIDS. To buy a copy, visit a local bookseller or call Penguin Putnam at 800/788-6262.

Just Say No!

As part of its five-year National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, the Office of National Drug Control Policy is distributing drug prevention information through Web sites. School employees can visit www.teachersguide.org, for classroom activities, teaching tips, and discussion guides. Parents seeking strategies on raising drug-free kids can check out www.theanti-drug.com. The site includes tips on addressing sensitive subjects such as a parent's personal history with drugs.

Contact Us

For information on other resources from the NEA Health Information Network, call the toll-free, resource hotline at 800/718-8387 (202/822-7572 in the Washington, D.C. area). Or visit our new Web site at www.neahin.org.

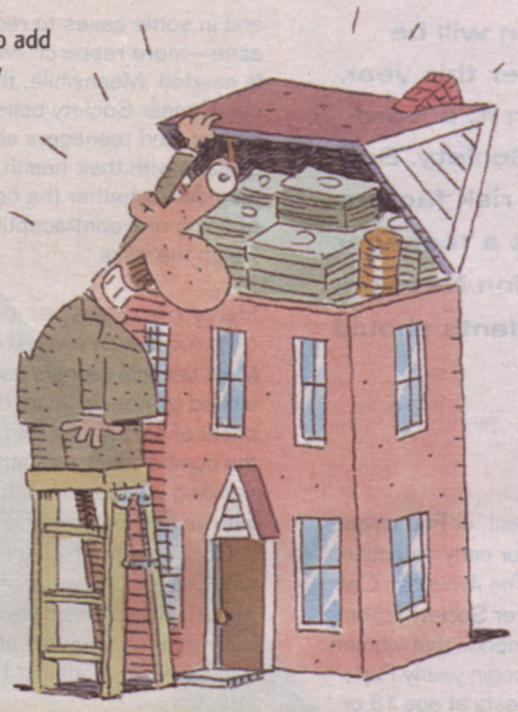
Focus on Finance

Information and helpful tips on managing your money – brought to you by NEA Member Benefits.

Is your home a gold mine?

Say you've got a big financial change coming: you want to add on to your home, pay for higher education, or pay for any large purchase. Just look to your biggest investment, your home, for leverage – and consider the merits of a home equity loan. A home equity loan will let you borrow up to 100% of the equity you've built up while paying off your mortgage. It can be used to finance almost any expense, whether it's a new car, a well-deserved vacation, or even to pay off high-interest debt. In many cases the interest on your payments is also tax deductible.

Incidentally, you can shorten your mortgage or lower your payments by refinancing your home. People choose to refinance in order to reduce their interest rate and payments, combine two existing mortgages, or get cash for home improvements. Either way, you can often roll the closing costs and fees right into your loan.



Life Insurance – How much is enough?

The key to providing the right amount of life insurance for your family's well being is to assess their everyday needs and make sure those needs will be met. Ideally, what you want is enough coverage that, when combined with whatever other assets you may have, will cover "final expenses", such as funeral costs and unpaid bills (mortgages, car payments, unpaid loans, etc.), as well as replace the income that will no longer be coming in.

Many insurance experts subscribe to the "5 to 9 times" formula. This simply means that the amount of insurance coverage you carry should equal 5 to 9 times your annual salary. The "5 times" amount should be adequate for taking care of ongoing living expenses, whereas the "9 times" amount takes into consideration the present value of your lifetime earnings and the effects of inflation.

Two cents worth. "Money is a terrible master but an excellent servant." – P. T. Barnum

Build a better budget.

Here is a helpful chart to suggest how much of your post-tax income should go toward various common expenditures. Keep in mind that these are just general guidelines. Track what you spend for one month and see how you match up with our budget minder.

Source: Frugal Families, Jonni McCoy, Full Quart Press, 1998

Monthly net household income: $	Recommended	My Spending	My Percentage
Housing (rent, utilities, household needs)	38%	$	%
Food	12%	$	%
Cars (payments, maintenance)	15%	$	%
Debts	5%	$	%
Insurance (life and homeowner)	5%	$	%
Entertainment (books, magazines, vacation)	5%	$	%
Savings	5%	$	%
Medical/Dental (bills and insurance)	5%	$	%
Clothing	5%	$	%
Miscellaneous (haircuts, allowances, gifts)	5%	$	%

3 easy ways to build up your savings.

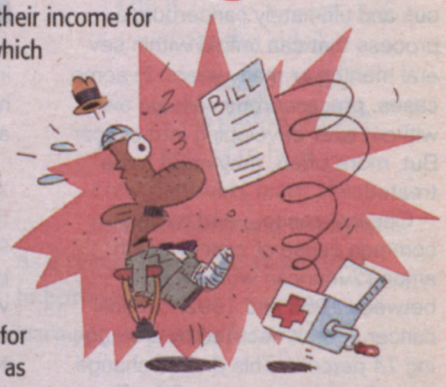
1. When you're finished paying off a loan, take the monthly payment and put it into a money market account.
2. Transfer your savings from a passbook account into a high-interest CD.
3. Take your spare change at the end of each day and put it in a jar; at the end of each month invest it in a mutual fund account.

For guaranteed growth, plant your savings in a CD.

When you have savings you don't want to take any risks with, consider a Certificate of Deposit that will let you pick the term, from a few months to a few years, and give you a high guaranteed rate of return. With FDIC insurance of up to $100,000, you can't lose. Today's volatile market has a lot of investors looking for safer bets, and the CD is a popular combination of total security and higher returns – often more than 6%. So if you're saving for your children's education, a mortgage down payment, or just a rainy day, plant some green in a CD – because you know it'll grow!

Why Medicare alone isn't enough.

Retired people, aged 65 and older, can expect to pay up to 14% of their income for health care, as opposed to just 4% for younger people.* Medicare, which Americans automatically qualify for when they reach age 65, can be counted on to cover only about half of these costs. However, a new health insurance plan, called Medicare Supplement or Medigap Insurance, can ensure that you will be covered for the expenses that Medicare doesn't pay. It's best to enroll in a Medicare Supplement program within 6 months of turning 65 when an "open enrollment" policy guarantees you will be accepted regardless of your health condition. If you wait until after that, you can be refused enrollment for any reason. When shopping for a Medigap plan, look for low premium prices, community-rated premiums that don't increase as you age, high quality of service, inflation factors that cover increasing costs, special discounts, and guaranteed renewal. A reliable, affordable plan can make a real difference for you and your retirement savings.†



Source: Harvard Health Letter
† NEA Consumer Guide to Understanding Medicare and Medicare Supplement Insurance

For more information on investment strategies and financial services for you and your family, call NEA Member Benefits at 1-800-637-4636.

Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET

Or visit our Web Site at www.neamb.com

nea Member Benefits

www.neamb.com

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Interested in Stocks? Try a New Service on the World Wide Web

Q: What's the best way for an investor to get started in stocks?

A: In the past, I've always recommended automatic investment plans with mutual fund companies. This is a plan where the company waives an initial minimum investment for those who are willing to make small, regular investments every month or every quarter.

They're still a good deal. But as of December '99, there is a new Web-based service that offers a similar option for buying stocks at ShareBuilder.com.

Automatic investment plans make the best sense for most investors because they allow us to save money by observing the old rule of "pay yourself first" and then to put that money to work in the stock market.

Investors can already do this by buying stock directly from companies using the popular direct purchase plans or dividend reinvestment plans, or DRIPs.

There are a couple of drawbacks to those plans, though. First, many of the most popular technology companies do not offer DRIPs. Second, heavy fees are beginning to creep into some of the plans. Third, bookkeeping can be a nightmare.

Direct investment programs are paper-based, putting the burden of record keeping on the investor. That can make keeping track of costs for tax purposes an onerous task. ShareBuilder consolidates all your statements and keeps track of cost basis automatically.

Another criticism of direct plans is that shares are purchased just once a month. ShareBuilder will purchase stocks once a week. "We're mimicking all the advantages of direct plans and DRIPS but eliminating all the negatives," says Brian Ratzliff, vice president of marketing and business development. "It's really only the online world that makes it possible to do this."

For just $2 per transaction ($1 for kids), an investor can set up an automatic investment program to buy stocks like AOL, Cisco Systems, Microsoft, General Motors, General Electric, AT&T, and Dell Computer. For a list of the 2,000 stocks available, go to the ShareBuilder.com Web site. There is no minimum to get started.

ShareBuilder is a new Web site developed by the folks at Netstock.com, which offers free research on the 1,600 companies that offer DRIPs and direct stock purchase plans.

Netstock also offers an "enrollment wizard," which allows the 200,000 people who use the Web site to enroll in direct stock purchase plans from those companies that offer them. Netstock gets its revenue from the companies that offer the plans, according to Ratzliff.

But ShareBuilder is a totally different program. The stocks that are offered are not necessarily those that have direct investment programs. Instead, the site developers put together a list of 2,000 of the largest and most popular stocks on the Big Board and the NASDAQ.

ShareBuilder does offer real-time sell- and buy-options for $19.95 a trade. But that is not what the service is designed for. "This is about saving, not about trading," Ratzliff says.

Q: My mother says I need disability insurance. I'm only 30 years old and healthy. What do you think?

A: Some employers offer good disability policies as part of the benefits package. So you probably need to buy one for yourself. Consider what is available to you and make sure you have protection that will cover you to retirement age.

Q: I did some computer consulting last summer and earned $12,000. Is this money eligible for a retirement account?

A: It certainly is. You are eligible to put up to $2,000 of that money in a regular IRA or a Roth IRA. You have until April 15 to open and fund your account.

How to choose? The regular IRA provides a tax deduction for your contribution as well as tax deferral on your earnings. You pay tax on everything when you pull it out in retirement.

There is no current tax deduction for the Roth. But the money that you put into a Roth is never taxed again, making it an extremely attractive retirement saving vehicle.

Eligibility for the Roth IRA is phased out for single taxpayers with incomes between $95,000 and $110,000 and for married taxpayers with incomes between $150,000 and $160,000. ✔

—Mary Rowland

Mary Rowland is a regular contributor to several major financial planning magazines.

Thrifty Educator

Each month, NEA members offer their best tips for saving money at their workplace. This month's tips come from Stephanie Swonger, an elementary teacher in Orange Park, Florida.

"I've found a great use for those little plastic animals. As part of our unit on habitats and food chains, my third graders will have the opportunity to do a unique project this year because I received a $500 Louis T. Camp Creative Teaching Grant from The Florida Council on Elementary Education!

"Students will research a habitat of their choice, choose from an assortment of small, plastic animals to create a food chain, and then create a small-scale model of the habitat. Each project will be accompanied by a written report, and the students will give a presentation to the class.

"Though I received funding, this project can be done with many odds and ends. A local craft store even donated silk flower "floor scraps"! When I did this last year, the students came up with some really neat ideas for their meadow gardens, deep forest caves, and tropical lagoons. One student even used sparkling mint toothpaste over small pebbles to create a realistic river bed! They are so proud when they put these projects on display in the Media Center, and some of my shyest students were the first to volunteer to stand in front of the class to present! Thank you, Louis T. Camp and The Florida Council on Elementary Education!"

FACTOID

9 out of 10 NEA Home Financing Program® participants say they would recommend the program to another member.

Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

In today's volatile economic climate, you are wise to worry now about adequately funding for retirement later. But what about your parents? If they are retired already, are they struggling to survive on a fixed income? Do they have enough to maintain a comfortable lifestyle? Or perhaps you're debating whether to sacrifice your children's education fund to help supplement your parent's income.

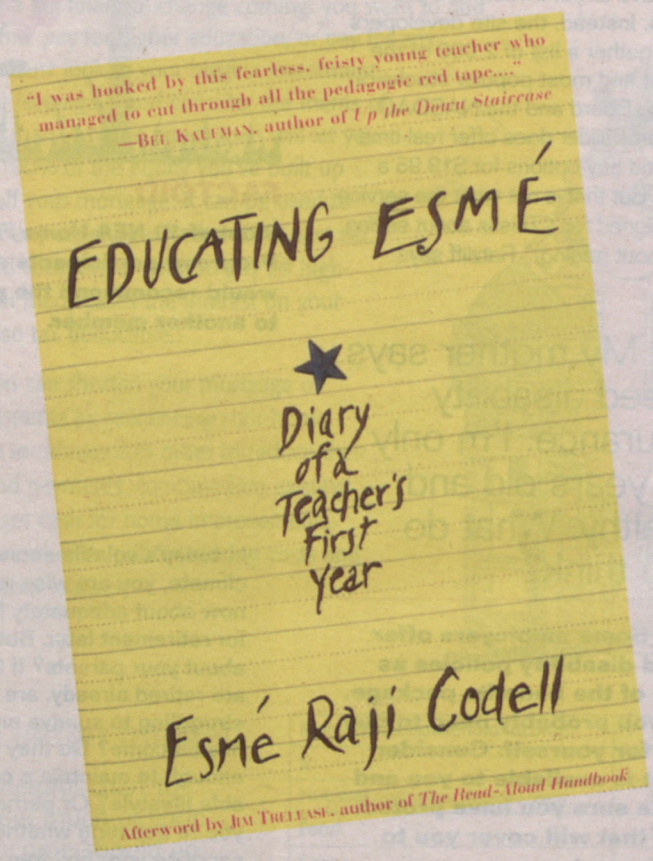
There is an answer—a reverse mortgage through the NEA Home Financing Program®. Now NEA members and their families can apply for a reverse mortgage (an FHA Home Equity Conversion Mortgage), which is backed by HUD.

A reverse mortgage is a loan that allows homeowners to convert some of the equity in their homes into cash, while retaining homeownership. Rather than making a payment to the lender each month as with a traditional mortgage, with a reverse mortgage the lender pays you. To be eligible, the homeowner must be at least 62 years old and own the home outright, or carry a very low balance on the traditional mortgage. You don't have to repay a reverse mortgage until you sell the home, vacate the property for other reasons, or die.

As an NEA member you or your parents get a $150 rebate after the loan goes through. For more information on reverse mortgages through the NEA Home Financing Program, call 800-NEA-4-YOU (800-632-4968) to speak with an experienced mortgage representative.

The Ups and Downs of a Teacher's First Year

Put a new teacher into a fifth grade classroom on Chicago's South Side and you get an experience to last a lifetime.


"I was hooked by this fearless, feisty young teacher who managed to cut through all the pedagogic red tape...."
—Bel Kaufman, author of Up the Down Staircase
EDUCATING ESMÉ
Diary of a Teacher's First Year
Esmé Raji Codell
Afterword by Jim Trelease, author of The Read-Aloud Handbook

EDUCATING ESMÉ: DIARY OF A TEACHER'S FIRST YEAR
By **Esmé Raji Codell**,
Algonquin Books, $17.95, pp. 204

When Esmé Raji Codell was preparing for a career in education, her mentor told her, "You are a very gifted teacher. Don't teach. Be an actress instead."

But Codell was as headstrong as she was dramatic. And so, in 1992, she began teaching fifth grade in a brand new public school on Chicago's notorious South Side. Like many first-year teachers, Codell came to the job with boundless energy and a determination to work magic in the lives of her underprivileged students. Yet, unlike many first-year teachers, she also had abundant confidence and a big, fresh mouth.

After instructing the children in her class to call her "Madame Esmé," Codell created a "time machine" filled with books to inspire them to read. She designed a rigorous, innovative curriculum that recast the basics in fun and exotic terms. "Math" was "Puzzling." Instead of science, she taught "Mad Scientist Time." Instead of social studies, she taught "Time Travel and World Exploring."

Codell also roller-skated down the hallways, wore costumes to class, and inundated her students with literature and art. When kids in her class acted up, she made them teach the class in a spirited bit of role-reversal.

The result? Codell won her fifth graders' undying devotion—and raised their test scores higher than any other class in the school. She also incurred the wrath of her school's administrators, who didn't appreciate her unorthodox attitude. She and her principal butted heads throughout the year, and, despite her best efforts, many of her students remained poverty-stricken, troubled, and demanding.

Eventually, Codell became exhausted and demoralized. She considered quitting teaching all together. Instead, she stuck it out and wrote a book.

Educating Esmé: Diary of a Teacher's First Year is based on an award-winning feature Codell recorded for National Public Radio. It is an honest and often hilarious account of her inaugural year in the classroom—a must-read for anyone entering the profession.

With its strong voice and distinctive protagonist, *Educating Esmé* is Generation X's answer to Bel Kaufman and Frank McCourt. At turns entertaining, damning, and heartbreaking, the diary is a testament to the very best and worst of teaching—to the small miracles that occur in the classroom every day, as well as the deadening bureaucracies. It describes in equal parts the joy and the thanklessness of the profession, the thrill and the frustration.

Codell spares no one in this memoir—least of all herself. She portrays her own naiveté and arrogance unabashedly, along with the ineptitude of her principal and the poignancy of her most difficult students. Both beginning and seasoned teachers can draw comfort and inspiration from her experience. Surely, they will identify with it. Certainly, they will feel touched and entertained. ✔

—Susan Gilman

EXCERPT

We are studying inventors. While the kids were at gym, I dressed up in an outfit with all sorts of weird stuff sticking out: rubber bands, gum, chocolate chip cookies, light bulbs, with a tag attached to each item saying who invented it. I wore roller skates, too.

Mr. Turner was nervous when he saw me. . . Boy, he would have been really nervous during my science magic show, if he had seen me put a piece of paper I had set on fire in a bottle to illustrate Bernoulli's Principle. Of course, I had a fire extinguisher near. But certain people just think it's their job to freak out.

TVTIPS

Homecoming: Sometimes I Am Haunted by Memories of Red Dirt and Clay

PBS, Thursday, February 3, 10-11 pm ET, check local listings.

Filmmaker Charlene Gilbert returns to her family's Georgia farm to explore the hardships Black farmers have faced since the early 20th century. The number of Black farmers in America has dwindled from nearly 1 million in 1920 to fewer than 18,000 today. The program uses archival photography and interviews with farmers to explore the symbolic and spiritual meaning of land ownership and loss. Visit www.pbs.org/homecoming for timelines and educators' guides. ✔

A Drop Around the World
Barbara S. McKinney, illustrated by Michael S. Maydak
Travel with Drop around the world and explore how water is transformed into steam, rain, snow, and ice. Describing the water cycle in poetic form and beautiful illustrations, this book can help elementary school students learn just how vital water is.
$7.95 plus $2.50 s&h from Dawn Publications, P.O. Box 2010, Nevada City, CA 95959, 800/545-7475. On the Web at www.DawnPub.com.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Read-Alouds

We all know that it is important to read to our children, but which books should we read them? *The Latest and Greatest Read-Alouds* offers book suggestions for 5- to 11-year-olds with brief plot descriptions. Included are tips for engaging children and inspiring them to read. $18.50 plus $2.75 s&h from Libraries Unlimited, P.O. Box 6633, Englewood, CO 80155-6633, 800/237-6124. On the Web at www.lu.com.

Defending Public Education covers five key issues: vouchers, charter schools, public school privatization, bilingual education, and parental rights. As a resource guide, it includes advice on organizing, national education organization listings, reading recommendations, article reprints, and more. $15, s&h included, low income pricing available from Political Research Associates, 120 Beacon Street, Suite 202, Somerville, MA 02143, 617/661-9313. On the Web at www.publiceye.org.

Drug Abuse Information

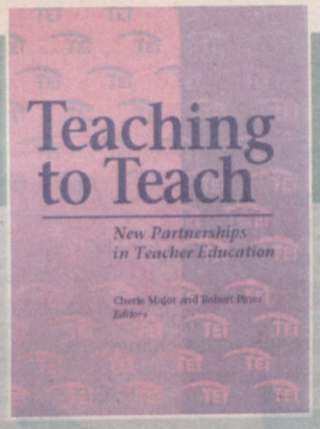
Technical background about kids and drugs. *Drug Abuse Information for Teachers* offers brief descriptions of many different drugs, exploring their impact, how they're used, and how they're treated. All this information is available in English and Spanish on the National Institute on Drug Abuse's automated phone system, InfoFax, at 888/644-6432. Also free on the Web at www.nida.nih.gov. Or write: NIDA, NIH, 6001 Executive Boulevard, Room 5213, Bethesda, MD 20892. By phone: 301/443-1124.

Science Fun

Need an idea for a science fair? How about a Moon Box, Lava-Flow Volcano, or Homemade Perfume? These are just a few examples in 100 *First-Prize Make-It-Yourself Science Fair* Projects. Each science project lists ingredients and includes the procedure and expected results. $21.95 plus $4 s&h from Sterling Publishing Co., 387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016, 800/367-9692, Fax 800/542-7567. On the Web at www.sterlingpublishing.com.

Hate Response

With 17 guidelines on teaching tolerance, *Responding to Hate at School* is a guide for all school personnel that deals with everyday challenges such as graffiti and student alienation, school-wide emergency responses, and long-range commitment. This short guide covers both the long-term and short-term effects of and solutions for acts of hate. Free from Teaching Tolerance, Southern Poverty Law Center, 400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104; fax 334/264-7310. On the Web at ww.teachingtolerance.org.



NEW from the NEA Professional Library

Teaching to Teach: New Partnerships in Teacher Education
Cherie Major and Robert Pines, editors.
NEA Professional Library.
216 pp., $16.95, #2083-9-00-F

Teacher education is transforming, and NEA is playing a vital role in the transformation. For the past five years, NEA's Teacher Education Initiative has been creating environments where schools, universities, and the Association act as equal partners in changing how the nation's educators are prepared for the classroom. How are these partnerships faring? *Teaching to Teach* explores teacher-training partnerships from the perspective of the educators involved in the process. These educators describe how professional development schools (PDSs)—often compared to the medical profession's teaching hospitals—can provide realistic, clinical experience for preservice teachers, ongoing professional development for practicing teachers, and opportunities for all educators to improve the quality of education for children and adults.

EXCERPT

Extended practical experiences are essential to an "educative practicum," as compared to an "apprenticeship" where beginning teachers follow a model but never have the opportunity to construct their own solutions or develop their own strategies for improving the educational system. Teachers entering the field will be better prepared if they have regularly engaged in ongoing debates about best practices, worked collaboratively to design curriculum and performance assessments, and helped to improve connections between schools and communities.

For more information or to order, check the Web at www.nea.org/books

Family History

History Comes Home gives children a chance to explore their own heritage and culture. Through interviewing family members, researching kinship charts, creating timelines, and making family videos, students learn and write about their family history. $17.50 plus $3.50 s&h from Stenhouse Publishers, P.O. Box 360, York, ME 03909, 888/363-0566. On the Web at www.stenhouse.com.

Raising Children

Raising Black and Biracial Children is a quarterly journal about parenting children of African descent. With articles on politics, health, wealth, and family issues, as well as a book section, this journal offers good advice, pertinent information, and experienced know-how. $2.50 each, one year subscription $9.95, from Raising Black and Biracial Children, P.O. Box 17479, Beverly Hills, CA 90209. 310/358-2932.

BOOKS by NEA Members

Gems in Myth, Legend, and Lore

Bruce G. Knuth
Tracing the use of gems in religion, medicine, magic, and astrology, *Gems in Myth, Legend, and Lore* explores almost everything you would ever want to know about 46 different gems. *Gems in Myth* also includes an informative section on literature references to gems from the Bible to Marbode to Shakespeare. $45.95 plus $3.50 s&h from Jewelers Press, 13440 Jackson Place, Thornton, CO 80241, 303/452-7764, Fax 303/450-3894.

Rebellion with a Purpose

Richard Sidy
Designed to help students accept challenges and reach their potential, *Rebellion with a Purpose* asks readers to look at their past experiences and make decisions for their futures. The SNS Web site has a free teacher's guide, lesson plans, and student resources. $9.95 plus $4.00 s&h from Seeking New Solutions Press, 380 Raintree Road, Sedona, AZ 86351, 520/284-9055, E-mail edresources @snspress.com. On the Web at www.snspress.com.

Write a Book For Me: The Story of Marguerite Henry

David R. Collins
Collins relates the details of the life of Marguerite Henry—from her early days to her books to her love of horses. With the help of black and white photographs and excerpts from Henry's letters, readers are given a personal perspective on this renowned writer. $18.95 plus $3.00 s&h from Morgan Reynolds, Inc., 620 S. Elm Street, Suite 384, Greensboro, NC 27406, 800/535-1504.

I Can Do It, I Really Can

Hope Blecher-Sass, illustrated by E. Silas Smith
I Can is a short book for young readers about a boy's self-assurance and self-motivation. Blecher-Sass also wrote *100th Day of School Activities*, which details 100 activities for elementary students, including science experiments and art projects. *I Can* is $4.50 plus $4.50 s&h from Dominie Press, Inc., 1949 Kellogg Avenue, Carlsbad, CA 92008. *100th Day* is $2.95 plus $3.50 s&h from Teacher Created Materials, Inc., 6421 Industry Way, Westminster, CA 92683.

NEA-Sponsored GoldCertificate® CD

18-month term – NEA interest rates are subject to change weekly.

6.56% APY*

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Sea First, Washington	5.35% APY** (18-month term)
First Chicago, Illinois	5.30% APY** (18-month term)
First Union, Florida	3.50% APY** (18-month term)

Simple arithmetic

As an NEA member, you don't have to do complicated calculations to figure out how to earn one of the highest yields in the nation. All you have to do is open up an NEA-Sponsored GoldCertificate CD offered by MBNA America Bank. You'll not only enjoy a great yield on your deposit, you can also rest assured knowing your savings are **FDIC-insured** up to $100,000 per depositor. What's more, you can take advantage of a low minimum opening deposit of just $1,000 – and flexible terms from 6 to 60 months. So if you or a member of your family† would like to earn a great yield on your deposit, forget the complicated calculations. Opt for the NEA-Sponsored GoldCertificate CD. To find out our current interest rates, to open up an account or to inquire about Traditional or Roth IRAs, call today. Or visit us at **www.neamb.com**.

1·800·457·2258
priority code 3300

nea Member Benefits
www.neamb.com

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MEMBER FDIC

*Annual Percentage Yield (APY) for the NEA-Sponsored GoldCertificate CD is valid from 12/6/99 through 12/12/99, based on a $1,000 minimum opening deposit, a term of 18 months and assumes that interest remains in the account until maturity. Penalty may be imposed for early withdrawal of CD principal. Withdrawals and fees may reduce earnings.

**All other bank APYs shown in the comparison chart are valid as of 12/7/99, based on a $2,500 minimum opening deposit and a term of 18 months. Source – *BISYS Research Services*, 12/7/99.

†Eligible NEA family members include parents, spouse (or domestic partner) and children.

The NEA Deposit Program has been developed for NEA members and their families only. If a member decides not to renew membership, that person and his/her family will no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates through the NEA Deposit Program. If eligible, a replacement account will be offered. **Absolutely no membership dues are used to market this program.** This certificate of deposit is offered through MBNA America Bank, N.A. FDIC insured up to $100,000 per depositor. Member FDIC. MBNA, MBNA America, and GoldCertificate are federally registered service marks of MBNA America Bank, N.A.

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CDNT0200

TV TIPS

Angela Anaconda

Fox Family Channel, Thursdays, 7-7:30 am and Saturdays, 9:30-10 am ET, check local listings. This animated series follows the wild imagination of Angela Anaconda, a third-grader trying to negotiate the expectations and friendships of school and home life. Nanette Manoir, the teacher's pet, is a constant thorn in everyone's side, but Angela manages to resolve her frustrations and cope with difficult situations creatively by constructing imaginative fantasies that give her perspective on her problems.

KIDSNET, a national resource for chidren's media in Washington, D.C., provides these listings. Check out the KIDSNET Web site at www.kidsnet.org.

Girlzopolis and Boyzopolis

girlzChannel and boyzChannel, Daily, 3-3:30 pm and 5-5:30 pm, check local listings. These fast-paced, magazine-style programs examine topics of relevance to today's girls and boys through the use of animation, discussions, and interviews. Each program features an older moderator and a panel of young girls or boys who discuss teen issues such as self-esteem, body image, emotions, stereotypes, and the opposite sex. New from Fox Family, girlzChannel and boyzChannel are networks that feature programs and issues of specific interest to girls or boys. See gchannel.com or bchannel.com for games, teen advice, discussion questions, and parenting topics.

Beakman's World

Sci-Fi Channel, Monday-Thursday, 8:30-9:00 am ET, check local listings. Now airing on the Sci-Fi Channel, this series features Beakman, a humorous, inquisitive scientist who has dedicated himself to answering science questions from viewers of all ages. Beakman responds to queries by performing various experiments that demonstrate how the world works. The award-winning series has attracted wide critical acclaim and praise from parents and educators for its unique and effective format. Visit www.beakman.com for more information.

Disney's Doug

UPN, Daily, check local listings for times. Now airing on UPN affiliates, this animated series follows the everyday adventures of 12-year-old Doug Funnie, an impressionable daydreamer dealing with the ups and downs of adolescence, middle school, and life's unusual dilemmas. Doug's imagination, his friends, and his daily diary help him through the toughest situations. At www.disneyone.com, kids can find puzzles, safety tips, and advice for making the most out of their visits to the Internet.

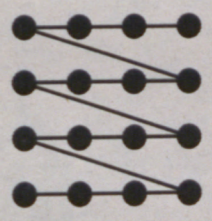
Little Bill

Nickelodeon, Mondays 9-9:30 am and Sundays 8-8:30 pm ET, check local listings. Based on the book series by Bill Cosby, this animated

✳ COMMUNICATION.

THE ANTI-DRUG.

A positive relationship cannot exist without communication. Research shows that kids believe they have valuable things to say. When teachers or mentors ask them and listen genuinely, **it helps build self-esteem and confidence.** Also it demonstrates that you value a relationship with them and support their intelligence and burgeoning independence. The important thing to remember about drugs is that **it's not a five minute talk. It's a dialogue.** As kids grow, they will need more information relevant to their exposure. In general, smoking marijuana is harmful. The younger a kid is, the more it may be. Research shows that people who smoke it before age 15 **are 7 times more likely to use other drugs.** It also shows that people who didn't smoke marijuana by age 21 were more likely to never smoke it. For more information, visit www.theantidrug.com or call 800.788.2800.



Communication is connection. During their teenage years, kids are exposed to an ever widening variety of people and influences. You are one of the most important. Tell kids that you care about them. Praise them when they do well, no matter how small the accomplishment. Stay connected.

Getting to know kids and letting them know you is one of the most effective drug deterrents. Through their teenage years, this is not always easy. Even still, research shows that kids still want this to happen, even as they are exploring and growing into their own individuality. So take time every day to listen to them and build your relationship. This message is brought to you by the Office of National Drug Control Policy/Partnership for a Drug-Free America.

32. Andrew or Lyndon
33. Andrew or Lyndon
34. Andrew or Lyndon

35. The Great American History Quiz is great for your students because:

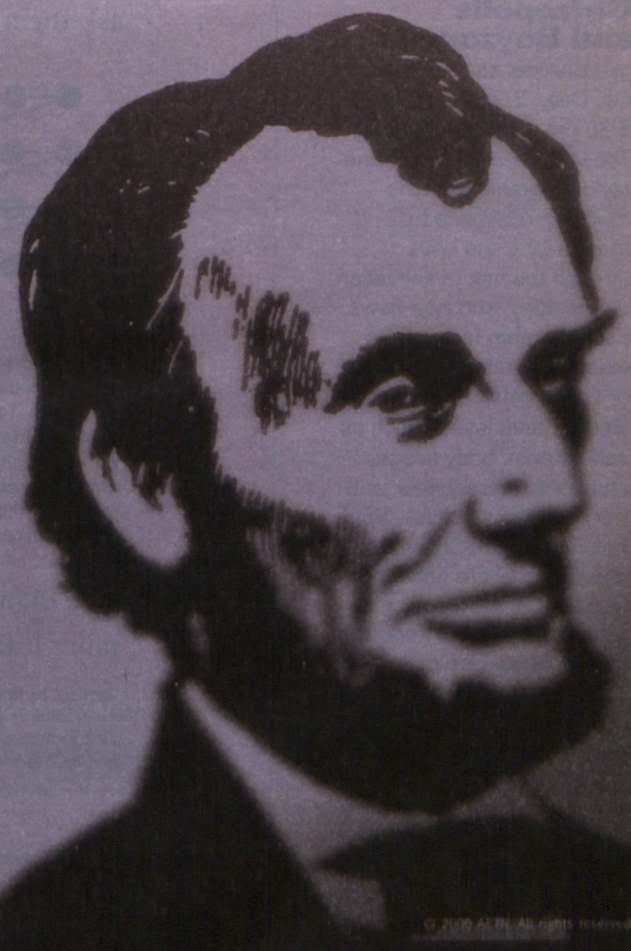
A. It's full of interesting, challenging questions

B. It's easy to get a scoresheet and play along

C. It's a great way to learn about American history

D. All of the above

36. A penny
A nickel
A dime
A quarter



THE GREAT AMERICAN HISTORY QUIZ

MONDAY, JANUARY 24
8PM ET/9PM PT

Your students can match their history skills with each other and the experts. It's one test everyone will love to take!
For an official score sheet, go online at:
HistoryChannel.com/quiz

THE HISTORY CHANNEL.
WHERE THE PAST COMES ALIVE.

series follows the adventures of an inquisitive and energetic five-year-old boy as he learns about the world around him and how he fits into it. The show emphasizes the importance of friendship while showing children how to solve problems creatively and fairly. Backed by research and a panel of educational consultants, the show is specifically designed to teach kids how to make a difference in their lives and in the lives of the people around them. Visit teachers.nick.com for lesson plans and more information.

TCM By the Book

Turner Classic Movies, February 6-11, 6:00 am ET. Because of the positive response from educators last year, TCM is re-airing its Teachers' Choice Award-winning By the Book selections this month. This season's classic literary films are Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Christie's *Murder Most Foul*, Wells' *The Time Machine*, Kipling's *Kim*, Dickens' *David Copperfield*, and Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Enrolled teachers receive free curriculum guides for the films and may record the commercial-free broadcasts for one-year use. Guides and enrollment information can be found at www.turnerlearning.com for information on enrollment, or call 1-800-344-6219.

I'll Make Me a World

PBS, Fridays, February 11-25, 9-11 pm ET, check local listings. This three-part documentary explores the legacy of African-American artists in the 20th century, including the vaudeville performers from the first generation born free, the writers of the Harlem Renaissance, the development of jazz over the years, and the contemporary filmmakers, authors, and hip-hop artists who continue to make an impact on modern American culture. Visit www.pbs.org/immaw for an arts chronology, artist profiles, and educational resources.

Mystery of the First Americans

PBS, Tuesday, February 15, 9-10 pm ET, check local listings. The 1996 discovery of a 10,000-year-old Caucasoid skeleton in Washington State set off a scientific controversy about the origins of "Kennewick Man." This NOVA documentary looks at previous theories about the earliest settlement of North America, the implications of early Caucasian presence, and the conflict with Native American groups who are calling for a halt to the scientific study of their ancestors' remains. Visit www.pbs.org/nova for transcripts and in-depth information.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Free Catalog

Designed to help educators teach and develop skills for social justice, *Teaching for Change* is a catalog full of multicultural books, videos, CD-Roms, and cassette tapes. Each listing includes a brief description, subject area, length, and price. Some resources are available in Spanish. Free from Teaching for Change Catalog, Network of Educators on the Americas, P.O. Box 73038, Washington, D.C. 20056, 202/238-2379, Fax 202/238-2378. On the Web at www.teachingforchange.org.

Multicultural Education

Advocating multicultural

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*For qualified applicants only. Loan commitment will be subject to the terms and conditions contained in the loan commitment letter for this program. Call a mortgage counselor for details. **This offer is only valid on loan applications made on or after January 1, 2000 and closed on or prior to December 31, 2000 through this program. Offer is subject to loan approval and other terms and conditions. This offer is not available on home equity loans and lines of credit. Call 1-800-632-4968 for additional "Driveaway Getaway" vacation package details and terms and conditions. The "Driveaway Getaway" vacation package is a program of MMS Incentives, which is solely responsible for the administration and all aspects of the vacation package. Norwest Mortgage is in no way responsible or liable for the services. Equal Housing Lender.

Branches: Enter DM# DMC0063299V in LIS. Refer to Affinity Programs At-A-Glance for additional details.

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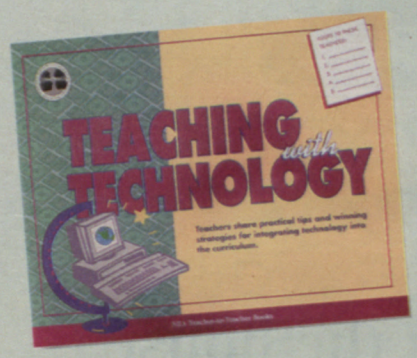
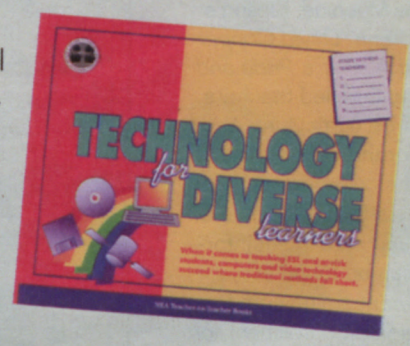
STOP Teaching *Like You're Still in the 20th Century*

A great resource for your district's or school's technology committee!

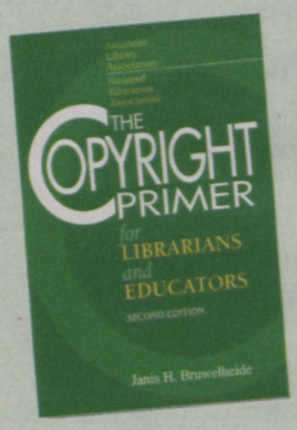
Maybe this is the year you resolved to finally use a computer without hyperventilating. Or maybe you're the one colleagues come to with all their computer problems—but you could use some fresh ideas for integrating technology into the curriculum. Whether you're a computer whiz or the Internet makes you dizzy, the NEA Professional Library has a special package of books to help you use technology more effectively.



The first book in the package, *Teaching with Technology,* tackles the tough question: How do you integrate technology into the curriculum in a meaningful way? If you're ready to stop teaching *about* technology and start using it as a learning tool for core subjects, this book is the guide you've been waiting for. Let NEA members show you how they revamped instruction to make technology a meaningful part of their teaching.



Concerned about making sure all the kids in your school become techno-savvy? In *Technology for Diverse Learners,* educators who work with ESL and at-risk students explain how computers and video technology can succeed where traditional methods fall short.



Is is okay to copy an image from someone's Web site and put it on your class's site? Have you heard rumblings from the district office about distance learning? *The Copyright Primer* is an indispensable reference tool to help you do the right thing with new media.

And, finally, here's a book to help you figure out how to pay for all these new tools. In *How To Get Grants and Free Stuff,* classroom teachers demystify the grant writing process for you and share ideas for tapping into freebies.

Buy all FOUR and pay FOR THREE!

Priced separately, these books would cost $49.85
—but this Technology Package is available at a special price of
$39.90 for NEA Members ($47.90 for nonmembers).
Item #2175-4-00-D.

Order the Technology Package online at www.nea.org/books or call 800/229-4200.

shipping & handling will be added to all orders.

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education, *An Introduction to Multicultural Education* examines the multicultural debate, stating the difficulties and positive consequences of curriculum reform. Included are educational guidelines for reform, suggestions for how to teach multiculturalism, and comments from experienced teachers. $26.65 plus $3.59 s&h from Allyn & Bacon, 160 Gould Street, Needham Heights, MA 02494, 800/278-3525. On the Web at www.abacon.com.

Lost Love

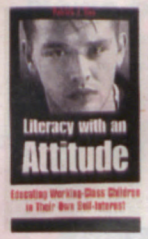
What can we say to a child who has just lost a parent, sibling, or other loved one? Offering comfort, compassion, and advice, *Helping Children Cope with the Loss of a Loved One* is a guide for adults to help children. With anecdotes about children's experiences, this book is divided into age groups in order to address each situation. $13.95 plus $4.95 s&h from Free Spirit Publishing, 400 First Avenue North, Suite 616, Minneapolis, MN 55401, 800/735-7323. On the Web at www.freespirit.com.

Honoring Educators

With short stories and poems, *To Honor a Teacher* is a collection of student tributes to teachers who influenced their lives. With notable contributors such as James Earl Jones, Richard Riley, Joanne Woodward, and Ara Parseghian, this book is just a small thank you to educators and a tribute to our educational system. $14.95 plus $4.25 s&h from Andrews McMeel Publishing, 4520 Main Street, Kansas City, MO 64111, 816/932-6700. On the Web at www.andrewsmcmeel.com.

Reevaluating Literacy

Literacy with an Attitude discusses how literacy is currently taught in order to redefine its place in education today. In a call to reevaluate curriculum and literacy techniques for working-class



children, this book details how working-class children do not and therefore should receive education comparable to upper- and middle-class children. $16.95 plus $3.50 s&h from State University of New York Press, State University Plaza, Albany, NY, 12246, 800/688-2877. On the Web at www.sunypress. edu.

Problem Solver

The Special Kids Problem Solver gives teachers the tools to help students with academic, behavioral, and physical problems. This resource provides background information about the causes and nature of each problem, references for more information, and a listing of organizations to contact. Teachers also learn how to assess and improve academic performance in their classrooms. $19.95 plus $3.95 s&h from Prentice Hall Press, 240 Frisch Court, Paramus, NJ 07652. On the Web at www.phdirect.com.

Commercials and Effects on Kids

The Center for a New American Dream is mounting a campaign to expose practices of commercials directed at children. The campaign consists of a free brochure, a short book, a public opinion poll, an essay/art contest for children, and a nationwide effort for this cause. The Kids and Commercialism brochure is available free. Contact the Center for a New American Dream, 6930 Carroll Avenue, Suite 900, Takoma Park, MD 20912, 877/68-DREAM, E-mail newdream2@newdream.org. On the Web at www.newdream.org.

Technology Guide

Touted as "the one source for all your school technology needs," the *Scholastic Technology Guide* includes more than 3,000 company and product listings. The guide is divided into five sections: educational software, teacher software, administrative software, hardware, and Internet & telecom. Each semester introduces a new guide, and the online version is constantly updated. $19.95 hardcopy, free online version, from Scholastic Inc., 555 Broadway, New York, NY 10012, 800/724-6527. On the Web at www.schooltechguide.com

Maintaining Momentum

Maintaining Momentum reports the findings from the American Institute of Physics' Fourth Nationwide Survey of High School Physics Teachers. The survey reveals why more and more high school students are taking physics, an improvement in teacher qualification, increased teacher salaries, and courses designed to be more accessible to students with less advanced mathematics backgrounds. However, there are still large disparities in student numbers and achievement levels across gender, racial, and economic lines. Free from the American Institute of Physics, One Physics Ellipse, College Park, MD 20740, 301/209-3070, fax 301/209-0843. Available for free download on the Web at www.aip.org/statistics.

DIVERSITY Calendar

April

Qing Ming Festival, April 5
The Qing Ming Festival is a Chinese national holiday honoring the dead. Dating back to almost 200 B.C.E., this Confucian festival is observed by visiting ancestor's graves, cleaning them, and presenting offerings. For more information about the Qing Ming Festival and other events, contact the Organization of Chinese Americans, 1001 Conneticut Avenue NW, Suite 707, Washington, D.C. 20036, 202/223-5500. On the Web at www.ocanatl.org.

Buddha's Birthday, Hanamatsun, April 8
One of two major holidays for Buddhists, Hanamatsun marks the birth of Siddhartha Gautama. Siddhartha lived in India from around 563 to 483 B.C.E. Buddhists usually celebrate this occasion on the nearest Saturday so as not to interfere with work. For historical information about this holiday, go to www.buddhapia.com/buddhapi/news/event/bong2540/english/e-birthday.html.

May

American Indian Day, May 8
American Indian Day honors American Indians in the United States. The first American Indian Day was observed on the second Saturday in May 1916 after a formal request was submitted by Red Fox James of the Blackfeet tribe in 1914. Now observation and its date are left up to the individual states.

African Liberation Day, May 25
African Liberation Day focuses on the current struggles and progresses of all African nations. The day is marked by rallies and parades. Celebration takes place throughout Africa and in parts of Russia, Canada, Brazil, and the United States. For more information, go to www.worldafrican.com/blackhistory/blackhistory.htm

June

Dragon Boat Festival, June 18
The Dragon Boat Festival honors China's first major poet, Ch'u Yuan, who drowned himself in protest of injustice and corruption in 278 B.C.E. Regattas, boating sports, and races between dragon-shaped boats mark this summer holiday. The celebration is to protect from evil and diseases. For more information and pictures, log on to www.ncsu.edu/midlink/dec97/holiday/boatz.html.

Juneteenth, June 19
In 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation declared freedom for all slaves. The end of slavery was a gradual and local process. Celebrating the freedom of slaves, Juneteenth originated around the time of the Civil War in Galveston, Texas. For more information and history, go to www.juneteenth.com..

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Science Prizes

Scholastic's Ms. Frizzle Award 2000, presented by Microsoft, honors proposals from K-6 teachers for creative science education projects that inspire imagination and learning for the new millennium. Eligible teachers must submit a proposal for a project that encourages kids to learn science through hands-on discovery and problem-solving. Applications must also include a description of the classroom environment, a letter of recommendation, and a budget and timeline plan for the project. The grand prize winner receives an award of $6,000, second place wins $2,000, and third place receives $500. The deadline for submissions is April 10, 2000. For complete rules and more information, contact Scholastic, Corporate Communications, 555 Broadway, New York, NY 10012, 212/343-6570. On the Web at www.scholastic.com/aboutscholastic/programs/awards.htm.

Violence Free

In a continued effort to decrease the levels of violence in our public schools, the ViolenceFree Network is creating a community forum. Educators, parents, and

Say goodbye to your high-interest debt for good with the NEA's lowest personal loan rates ever!

Consolidate and save with rates as low as 11.99%.* Thanks to our lowest rates ever, you can now save up to hundreds of dollars a year in finance charges by consolidating your high-interest bills into one low monthly payment with the NEA Credit Plan® personal loan. Loan amounts range from $3,000 to $25,000**—all with a fixed Annual Percentage Rate (APR) as low as 11.99%. There are no lengthy applications or collateral required. And you can even apply by phone and **receive a loan decision in as little as 15 minutes!**

Enjoy flexible terms and no payments for 90 days.† With the NEA Credit Plan personal loan, you can choose between 24 to 84 months to repay your loan, depending on how much you borrow. If you like, you can even pay back your loan early with no penalty. And now for a limited time, you can take advantage of **our special 90-day deferred payment option.** To apply call **1-800-545-4094,** Monday–Thursday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.(EST) and mention **priority code DNLL.**

Affordable Monthly Repayment Chart

Loan Amount	Term: 24 months	36 months	48 months	60 months	72 months	84 months
$3,000	$147	$104	$82	N/A	N/A	N/A
$10,000	$488	$344	$273	$231	N/A	N/A
$15,000	N/A	$516	$409	$346	$304	N/A
$25,000	N/A	$860	$682	$576	$506	$457

These estimated payments are based on an Annual Percentage Rate (APR) of 11.99%.* Your APR may be higher. Actual payment amount and term may vary.†

Call 1-800-545-4094

and mention priority code DNLL today to receive your loan decision in as little as 15 minutes.

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*The Annual Percentage Rate (APR) may range from a fixed 11.99% to 17.99%, based on your income and creditworthiness. If you are not approved for the lowest available APR under this program and MBNA is unable to contact you, all funds may be sent to you in check form for your endorsement.

**Receipt of the maximum credit line is subject to MBNA America's income and creditworthiness standards.
There is a check transaction fee equal to 1% of the U.S. Dollar amount of each check you use to obtain an advance (fee: minimum $2; maximum $10).

†Your repayment term begins at the end of the 90-day deferral period. All payments are deferred for three months after the purchase date. Finance charges continue to accrue. You may prepay at anytime without penalty.
The NEA Credit Plan personal loan has been developed for NEA members and their families only. If a member decides not to renew his/her membership that person and their family may no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates and fees offered through the NEA Credit Plan personal loan program. If eligible, a replacement loan may be offered. Any account opened in response to this offer will be governed by the laws of Delaware.
The NEA is not involved in the credit application process. All applications are subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America. The account is issued and administered by MBNA America Bank, N.A.
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students are invited to participate in a variety of ways: the Public Schools Search Conference, Open Space Technology Conference, Cyberspace Internet Conference, and by creating their own CyberZones. Designed to bring more people into the debate, CyberZones will be established in public libraries, school libraries, businesses, and service organizations. For more information on the ViolenceFree conferences and organization, go to www.ctarrce.org/nomore_violence.htm.

Space Day

Ever wonder what it would take to create a special exercise machine for use in microgravity? Or how to build a human habitat in outer space? Beginning this month, teachers and students in grades 4-6 throughout North America and beyond will be contributing their solutions to these questions. Through a series of creative problem-solving Design Challenges, students will grapple with the demands and challenges of living and working in space, the theme of the fourth annual Space Day celebration on Thursday, May 4, 2000. Prior to Space Day, students will be able to join in this National Classroom by logging on to a virtual environment where they can seek information and exchange ideas with other student "experts" and adult experts as well. Further information on the Design Challenges and Space Day 2000 are available on www.spaceday.com.

WEB WINNERS

Online Information

At the ERIC/AE Full Text Internet Library, there are over 250 links to the best books, reports, journal articles, newsletter articles, and papers accessible through the Internet. The collection currently includes titles from nine online journals and 29 organizations. ERIC/AE provides a well-structured framework in order to browse and search with ease. On the Web at ericae.net/ftlib.htm.

News from Space

Lift off into outer space with this NASA-designed Web site just for students. With current news about our universe, information about space weather and the aurora, and scientific research, this site offers everything from light(-speed) reading to substantive data about our stars. NASA also includes links to other student sites such as Space Link and Lift Off to Space Exploration. On the Web at science.msfc.nasa.gov.

Free Radio

Dedicated to free speech, free press, and freedom, the Freedom Forum offers free online radio broadcasts of current debates about our First Amendment rights. Each month features a variety of programs. Past programs have included "The National Y2K Summit: Public Preparedness vs. Public Panic," "State of the Media in Latin America," and "Exploring Sensation: Art, Outrage, and the First Amendment." Real Player/Real Audio required to hear broadcasts. Check www.freedomforum.org/freeradio.

Aging Concerns

Concerns about your parents' health and happiness can arise with each passing day. Answering questions about health care, nursing homes, Social Security, medical problems, and financial planning, ElderWeb Online offers tools to help prepare for the needs of aging parents. It also offers valuable information you'll need for your retirement and long-term planning. On the Web at elderweb.com.

StudyWeb

"The learning portal" provides research quality links on everything from grammar and composition to teacher resources. Compiled by Ph.Ds, teachers, homemakers, and students, StudyWeb provides safe and useful links for everyone's needs. Whether general interest, research help, or just curiosity, StudyWeb has a link for you. On the Web at www.studyweb.com.

School Locator

Need to find a school? Or want to know about your district's demographics? The U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics provides an online national public school and school district locator. Find which public schools are in an area, a school address or phone number, or the number of students in a school district. On the Web at nces.ed.gov/ccdweb/school.

Health and Fitness

Whether your interest is competitive sports, recreational sports, or health and fitness, the Women's Sports Foundation is for you. The site is devoted to improving the physical, mental, and emotional health of women. Through education, advocacy, recognition, and grants, the Foundation tries to increase opportunities for girls and women in sports. On the Web at womens sportsfoundation.org.

Britannica Online

Opening with links to the day's top news events, Britannica.com organizes Web sites, magazines, books, and even the complete Encyclopædia Britannica for students and educators online. Also included is the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. Great for learning what's on the Web and starting on students' research papers. On the Web at www.britannica.com

JournalismNet

When you need information, JournalismNet provides 150 Web pages and over 3,000 links to breaking stories, international headlines, and in-depth research. Created by an investigative journalist, this site is perfect for students needing story ideas for the school newspaper, teachers who need more information to supplement course material, and administrators who want to know how public policy will affect their school. On the Web at www.journalismnet.com.

Edifying

Looking for some useful educational software without all the hype? You may want to try tukids.tucows.com. Here's a site with thousands of useful, virus-free files that parents and their children can download.

Nothing Fancy

The Air Force has a newly redesigned Web site to offer viewers an insider's view of the service—current and historical. Included on the site is an Online Airline Show and free screen saver. Go to airforce.com.

Ordering Info

Sampleville boasts that it doesn't just find the greatest free offers—"we actually order them for you!" Categories range from beauty products to food to pet merchandise. Registration required, but membership is free.www.sampleville.com.

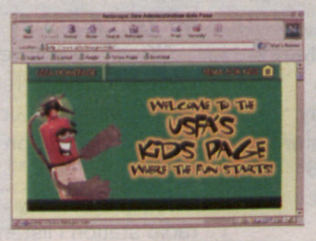
Peace Promotion

The Peace Calendar, created by young Palestinian and Israeli artists, seeks to encourage communication among children across borders. www.peacecalendar.com/

So Timely

Share your thoughts and feelings with the universe—or at least whatever universe there is 50,000 years from now. The KEO satellite will be launched in 2001, hang out in orbit and then deliver your message back to Earth 50 millennia from now. See www.keo.org.

Fighting Fire



With nearly 100,000 fires started every year by children, the United States Fire Administration developed a Web site to teach kids about fire safety. Teaching about smoke alarms, escape plans, fire safety in the home, the site includes informational and interactive tools to promote these precautions. Once kids learn about fire safety, they can test their skills in Hydro's Hazard House by identifying fire hazards. On the Web at www.usfa.fema.gov/kids.

Quoteables

You'll never again be at a loss for a good quote. This cyber version of Bartlett's provides a quick search feature. All you do is type in a keyword and then browse through some familiar quotations. www.bartleby.com/99/

Yeats Fans

Fans of the 20th century poet William Butler Yeats will love this site, courtesy of a Harvard Web wonder. At the site, you can listen to Yeats recite his own works in 1930s broadcasts. www.fas.harvard.edu/~ndrose/audyeats.html

Ask the Experts

XpertSite wants to be the Web site where people with questions find people with answers. An extensive range of subjects to choose from, including such diverse topics as law, gardening, technology, and travel. XpertSite.com/

A Heavyweight Weighs In

One of the world's largest educational publishers has launched its new Web site and it's huge. Scholastic, Inc. claims its new site, Scholastic.com offers 12,000 pages that directly support teachers and other school staff, including lesson plans, interactive Web activities, and live author interviews. J. K. Rowling, author of the *Harry Potter* books, was a recent guest on the site. There's also a news section that offers updates on student-appropriate current events, pop culture features, and student polls.

in the Light Lane

It's Tomato, Not Tomato

Recently I was reading one-on-one with a first grade student who encountered the words "thank you" for the first time in print. Hoping she would use some of her newly learned reading strategies, I gave her plenty of time to work out the word herself. After a few moments, I decided to tell her the word "thank." When she didn't respond, I said more emphatically, "Thank."

She responded, 'I'm thanking, I'm thanking." Needless to say, I'm from Tennessee!

Lisa Trewhitt Earby
Cleveland, Tennessee

One of my first graders proudly came up to me the other day with half a loaf of banana bread. He proudly announced, "Here is my homework."

I was quite confused, so I asked him what assignment he meant. He replied, "It was to bring in a dessert I would like to share." I explained that the homework assignment sheet said, "We are studying the desert. Please bring in something to share." Now all my first graders know these two words.

Tonya Pagel
Brecksville, Ohio

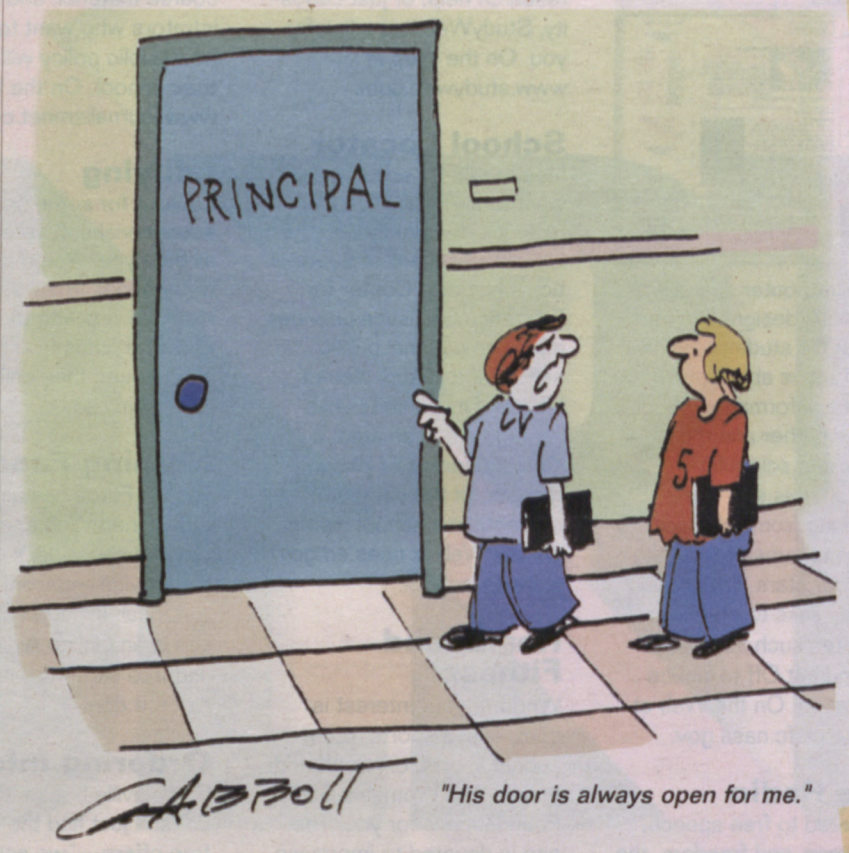
I am an elementary school librarian. Kindergarten student Avery made a handmade card for me with a Dalmatian on the cover. Inside the card was a gift certificate to a local bookstore, because Avery wanted to make a little "Dalmatian" to the library.

PJ Charnofsky
Rolling Hills Estates, California

Got Laughs?

Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Fax: 202/822-7206. Send E-mail to neatoday@nea.org.

Want a classroom chuckle delivered to your E-mail box once a week? Subscribe to the new "In the Light Lane" mailing list. Just send an E-mail to join-lightlane@list.nea.org (no subject or message needed).



"His door is always open for me."

The Generation Gap

In my kindergarten class, I held up an old LP record for the children to see. I asked the students to guess what this was. One little boy's jaw dropped and he said, "Wow, that is the biggest CD I have ever seen!"

Derek Haroldson
Sauk City, Wisconsin

I'll never forget my early years as an eighth grade earth science teacher. I was outside during lunch duty when a boy asked me, "What's your favorite rock group?"

I wondered how he knew that I was thinking about rocks and minerals—we were getting ready to embark on just such a unit in my classes. Although I thought it odd to come up with a "favorite," I opted to choose one. "Igneous is probably my favorite rock group," I answered. "They are associated with volcanoes, that's pretty exciting."

The boy looked a bit puzzled. I asked, "Which rock group is your favorite?"

"Kiss" he answered. When he turned and departed, I noted a picture of the make-up laden band members, Kiss, on the back of his t-shirt.

I know that boy wondered what radio station I listen to.

Susan Oliver
Grand Rapids, Michigan

During Fire Prevention Week, our preschool class visited the fire station and discussed all the usual fire safety tips. A couple of weeks later, a parent told us that while starting to play some family card games such as Go Fish and Concentration, their son insisted that he could not play those games anymore. They were completely puzzled and when he was questioned his reply was, "Because our teachers said that we can't ever play with matches."

Carol Rasmussen
Waverly, Iowa

Each day after lunch, my second grade class has 30 minutes of DEAR (Drop Everything and Read). During this time, I let two students sit in bean bag chairs to read. It is the job of one student to announce the names of the "bean baggers" to the class at the beginning of DEAR. One day, she came up to me and asked, "Is it time for Drop Dead and Read?"

Glenn Coolong
Monson, Massachusetts

Students were assigned to write a report on an occupation of their choice. During the lesson, students were reminded about plagiarism and putting information in their own words. Well, one student took this to the extreme by explaining that "to be a lawyer, you have to pass the bar examination, which is a test where you drink alcohol and try to answer questions that someone asks!"

Debbie Sixel
Chilton, Wisconsin

My first graders had been studying the five senses for several days. I asked them to tell me one of the senses.

After a long pause and no answers, one boy raised his hand very enthusiastically. Good, I thought, at least one student had been learning something. In a very sincere voice, he said, "A sense of humor!"

Donna Neff
Lakin, Kansas

I was doing some diagnostic testing with my first graders and asked one little girl how old she was.

"Six," she said.

"When will you be seven?" I asked.

"On my next birthday," she replied.

"Do you know when that is?" I asked.

"No", she said slowly, "but my last birthday was June 26!"

Annette Taulbee
Orcutt, California

A young colleague of mine amazed my fourth graders by bringing to class a freshly picked sunflower with a diameter well over 12 inches. Our students often enjoy chewing roasted sunflower seeds, but they never realized the source of those seeds.

After observing all the edible seeds lined up in circular patterns on the face of the sunflower, one student inquired, "What kind is it?"

Mrs. McCann replied, "Well, it's a sunflower, of course."

"I know that," Vanessa quickly responded, "but is it barbecue or spicy?"

My colleague looked over to me, smiled and said, "I think it's original flavored."

Michael Szewczyk
Irvington, New Jersey

During the social studies lesson in a fourth grade classroom where I was a guest teacher, the classroom teacher had provided maps of the United States. The students were to label the map with the names of all 50 states. Most students needed individual assistance with the New England states. After I pointed out Vermont and New Hampshire to one boy, he smiled and said, "So, that's where New Hamster is!"

Diane Sontag
Eugene, Oregon

I overhead an art student complaining about his very strict English teacher. He said, "She is so nit-picky she would turn the 'R' around in Toys Я Us!"

Margaret Ewert
LaCrosse, Wisconsin

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For application, write: Jewish Labor Committee, 25 East 21st Street, NY, NY 10010. 212/477-0707. Applications due April 15.

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The Education Technology Promotion Guide from the Software Publishers Association offers guidelines for publishing the success of your educational technology program. A CD-ROM includes letter and press release templates in both MAC and PC formats. To ob tain a copy for your local Association, E-mail your name, address and the name of your local to Shelstar@aol.com.

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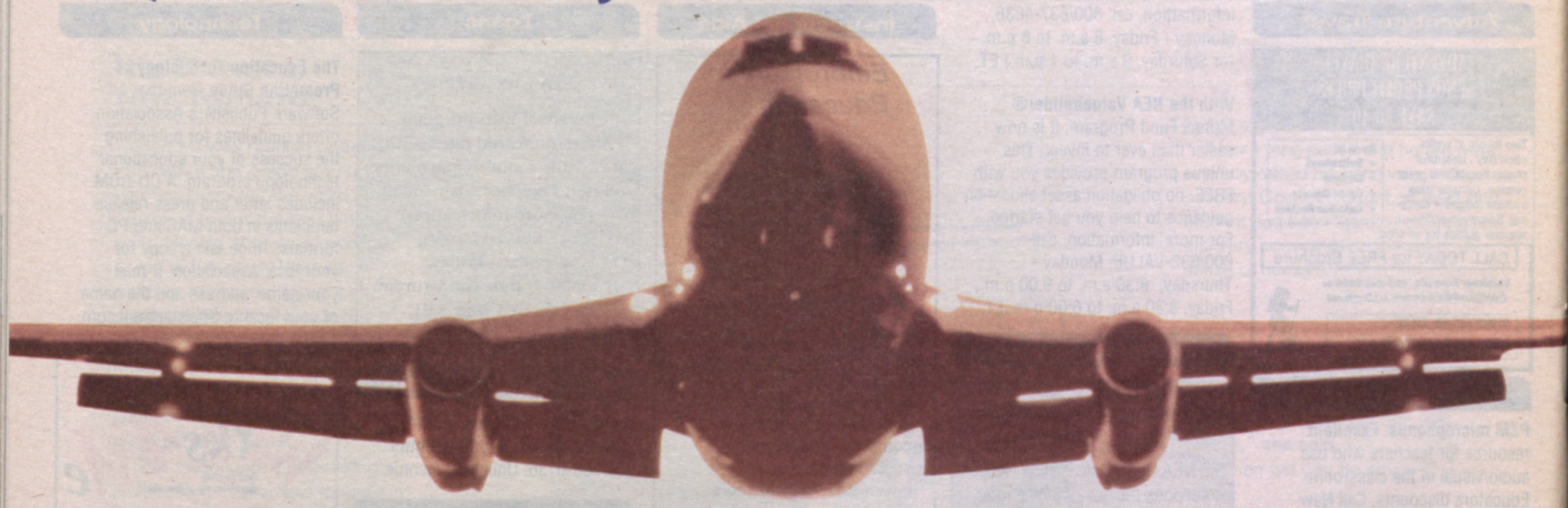

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Air travel rewards consist of a scheduled round-trip ticket for travel within or between two designated zones of the lower 48 states (Zone 1 – locations within the Eastern and Central time zones; Zone 2 – locations within the Mountain and Pacific time zones); plus travel from Alaska and Hawaii. The number of *Points* and corresponding maximum dollar value of tickets ("MDV") required for travel are: for travel wholly contained within Zone 1 or Zone 2: 10,000/$300; between Zones 1 and 2: 15,000/$500; to Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, the Bahamas or Bermuda: 25,000/$600; to Europe (and any other international destination which may be available): 35,000/$1,000.

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Hotel accommodation rewards are valid at participating properties in the United States. Advance reservations of at least seven days are required and are subject to availability. There is no minimum stay requirement. Rewards are valid for a standard single- or double-occupancy room with a nightly rate, including tax. Personal, optional and incidental expenses are your responsibility. These are the current requirements for a hotel accommodation reward: for a nightly room rate up to $110: 3,000 *Points* and for a room rate up to $200: 5000 *Points*.

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The choice is yours. You can go on paying high car insurance rates, or you can pick up the phone and call **1-800-841-5660**. Be sure to have your current policy handy, so we can tell you in a matter of minutes exactly how much you could save.

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Use this chart to see what GEICO could save you on your car insurance.

YOUR CURRENT COVERAGE		YOUR CURRENT PREMIUM	GEICO PREMIUM	YOU SAVE
Bodily Injury: _____ Per Person _____ Per Occurrence	CAR 1			
	CAR 2			
Property Damage: _____ Per Occurrence	CAR 1			
	CAR 2			
Personal Injury Protection or Medical Payments: _____ Per Person	CAR 1			
	CAR 2			
Uninsured Motorists: _____ Per Person _____ Per Occurrence _____ Property Damage	CAR 1			
	CAR 2			
Comprehensive (Your Car): _____ Deductible	CAR 1			
	CAR 2			
Collision (Your Car): _____ Deductible	CAR 1			
	CAR 2			
Rental Reimbursement: _____ Per Disablement	CAR 1			
	CAR 2			
Government Employees Insurance Co. • GEICO General Insurance Co. • GEICO Indemnity Co. • GEICO Casualty Co. These shareholder-owned companies are not affiliated with the U.S. Government. GEICO auto insurance is not available in MA or NJ. GEICO: Washington, DC 20076.		**GEICO SAVES YOU THIS MUCH....**		**$**

Call GEICO today at **1-800-841-5660** for a free quote. We'll give you a line-by-line rate comparison with your current coverage so you can see the savings. Where available, you can use your MasterCard, VISA, Discover®Card or personal checking account for instant coverage. For better service when you call, please have your current policy and all vehicle identification numbers and driver's license numbers handy.

Call 1-800-841-5660, 24 hours a day, for a great value on car insurance.
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